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# STUDIES IN DIPLOMACY

V. Benedetti

# STUDIES IN DIPLOMACY

FROM THE FRENCH

OF

COUNT BENEDETTI

FRENCH AMBASSADOR AT THE COURT OF BERLIN

With a Portrait

NEW YORK
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1896

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# PREFACE

When a person has been caught, in the front row, in an immense and painful national catastrophe, when he has issued from it injured by the iniquity of party feeling and the bad faith of the enemies of his country, he has lost peace of mind, and to regain it resorts to the study of the events that made him a victim. That fate has been mine. I venture to put together, in this volume, the writings I have been occupied with in silence and retirement; they are purely diplomatic essays, and have appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes.*

It seems to me, however, fit and opportune that they should be preceded by a few rapid remarks which cannot be without interest to the reader, whilst they will have particular value for the author of these pages.

Those who lived through the woeful year have certainly not forgotten the explosions of anger that resounded all over France at the time when the question of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern's

candidature to the Spanish crown sprung up, and which became still more acute after the invasion of our territory. Public opinion, or rather the press, did not confine itself to Prussia's direful underhand dealings, it denounced with equal violence the want of forethought on the part of the Imperial Government, and what it termed the incapacity of its agents. I was personally held up to the indignation of the country. Strange to say, it was a semi-official newspaper, the *Constitutionnel*, that first put me on the rack. At that time I had only just reached Ems, entrusted with a mission fraught with difficulties apparent to every one, and to bring it to a happy issue it was essential I should enjoy, above all that I should appear to enjoy, the entire confidence of my Government. I thought it right to call the Duc de Gramont's attention to this unfortunate incident, begging him to dispel the unjustifiable accusations of which I was personally the object, either at the tribune or in the *Journal Officiel*. He paid no attention to my entreaties.

They bitterly reproached me with having neither foreseen, nor even had a presentiment of, the agreement come to between Berlin and Madrid to the advantage of Prince Leopold, and made the same charges in regard to the cordial understanding arrived at between Prussia and Russia. But, as a matter of fact, I had fathomed Count Bismarck's

design in the course of the preceding year, as soon as it had been conceived, and without having been incited to do so otherwise than by a sense of duty, and I had called the attention of my Government to the matter, whilst requesting to be authorised to have an explanation on the subject with King William's Prime Minister. My first despatch in regard to this bears the date of March 27th, 1869. Acting in accordance with the instructions I had thus invited, I had a long interview with Count Bismarck. I gave an account of it on May 11th, and was able to affirm, after having received my interlocutor's avowal, that I had been quite right in my conjectures, namely, that Prince Leopold's candidature had been brought forward and discussed at Berlin. I shall have occasion to return to this subject later on; but it is of importance to me to establish here, that by having my correspondence of the preceding year placed before him again, M. de Gramont could have safely shielded me, and put an end to the erroneous rumours, reproduced and commented on by the press to the prejudice of the consideration enjoyed by the agent representing him at Ems. He wrote afterwards, but too late, in a book published in 1872 :[1] "Count Benedetti's complaint was justifiable; but, to have defended him, at that moment, against the newspapers that were attack-

[1] *La France et la Prusse avant la guerre*, p. 382.

ing him, it would have been necessary to divulge the whole exchange of views that took place in 1869, and this narration could not have failed to have considerably increased the irritation of the public mind, as it would have shown that Prussia acted with full knowledge of the circumstances, and that the Prussian Government was aware to what point it was wounding French interests and feelings, by raising the question of the Hohenzollern candidature again. The Government therefore considered it right to keep silent, at least for the moment, and thought Count Benedetti would continue for some time longer to make a sacrifice of his personal feelings, which were justly wounded by the undeserved attacks of a few newspapers."

This sacrifice was imposed on me, and I submitted to it although it was prejudicial to the task I was performing at Ems. But was I relieved at the proper time? By no means; I continued under the weight of those accusations, which should have been refuted at once so as to show the country that the Imperial Government was right in repelling the audacious combination prepared at Berlin, and that its agents had served it well; to show Europe to what degree of perfidy the policy of the Prussian Government had attained in this affair; finally, to thoroughly establish that it had conducted

the matter in such a way as to place France in this dilemma: to go to war or accept the accession of a German prince in Spain. Count Bismarck would certainly not have failed to have done so.

As a matter of fact, what happened? Finding authority in the blame the *Constitutionnel* inflicted on me, its contemporaries of all shades hastened to multiply the reproaches it had been the first to pronounce. According to some, the Government I had kept so ill-informed should recall me from Ems and revoke me by a minute, setting forth the motives for doing so, inserted in the *Journal Officiel;* in the opinion of others its duty ordained that it should bring me before a committee of inquiry. These amenities so ill-adapted to uphold me in the negotiations, at once so arduous and so delicate, that I was engaged in with the King of Prussia, reached me each morning with the Paris mail. They continued more ardent and bitter, without being any more justifiable, after my return. "If Count Bismarck," wrote M. About in the *XIXe Siècle*, "imagines we are thirty-six million Benedettis in France, he is making a great mistake."

No one troubled about the justice of these invectives, however cruel they were. As no part of my correspondence had been published,

it was impossible for any one to determine how I had acquitted myself of my functions, and public opinion remained convinced that I had neglected to give the Imperial Government information, that I had failed in all my duties, and that they were therefore authorised to load me with a good share of the responsibility of our disasters. As our defeats became more serious, public feeling was exasperated, and the conviction that I was devoid of all diplomatic understanding, that during my mission to Prussia I had been constantly inferior to my task, gained consistency as it spread, like a fact henceforth beyond discussion. I then noticed persons who, on all occasions, had shown themselves anxious to give me proof of their esteem, slip away so as to avoid my presence. Sharing the general uneasiness, and anxious for news from the seat of war, I often visited the Corps Législatif, persuaded that the Government might at any moment give some information to the Chamber. A friend came and found me in the gallery to which I had access, to advise me not to show myself there, as my presence so aroused the anger of certain members of the Assembly. "There is the culprit," they exclaimed forgetting that the real guilty parties were, in the first place, the deputies who had refused the Government, notwithstanding the patriotic efforts

and eloquent demonstration of Marshal Niel, the means to carry on a war which had been foreseen and had become inevitable since Sadowa. "You want to make France an immense barracks," they said to this brave soldier. "You will make it a huge cemetery," was the rejoinder. One knows, at the present day, on which side was foresight and reason.

Party spirit leads the best minds so thoroughly astray that, on the occasion of Count Bismarck's last avowals an important journal placed me in presence of this singular dilemma: "Either our Ambassador," it said, "had seen at Ems the despatch addressed, in accordance with the King's commands, by Herr von Abeken, to the President of the Prussian Cabinet, a despatch which was so fraudulently altered at Berlin, and he communicated its terms to the Imperial Government; or else he was unable to get the information and was ignorant of the contents of that document. In the first of these two suppositions, M. de Gramont and his colleagues should alone assume the responsibility of ulterior events; in the second, on the contrary, the Ambassador failed in the most essential of his duties, that of keeping his Government correctly informed. He is the chief culprit."

How could I know the contents of the despatch sent from Ems to Berlin? Could I have my eye

and hand in the King's private room, and thus be immediately informed as to the instructions the sovereign sent his Ministers? The argument is really not worthy of the newspaper, generally more serious and circumspect, that appropriated it, and the tenour of which it found in publications without consistence. Would the writer in the same journal admit, indeed, that it is impossible to pen either a telegram or despatch at the Quai d'Orsay without the diplomatic agents accredited to Paris being in a position to send a copy to their Governments? But, besides, what did Herr von Abeken say in his despatch to Count Bismarck? We now possess the exact text of it brought to the tribune of the Reichstag by General Caprivi. Herr von Abeken gave a summary of the incidents that had occurred at Ems during the day of July 13th, and of which I had, having taken part in them, given an account on my side. Now the versions forwarded to Paris and Berlin were absolutely identical. If I had had the despatch I am reproached with having been ignorant of before me, I could not have given the Imperial Government more correct information. It pleased Count Bismarck to alter the communication of his sovereign so as to inform Europe and particularly Germany, contrary to all truth, that an Ambassador at Ems had been humiliated by the King. Can I be in any way responsible? And is it not

singular that, when Count Bismarck boldly lays claim to the initiative of this misdeed, a French newspaper should find a pretext, in this incident, for reverting to the accusations that were disavowed even by the man who was the cause of them!

I have pointed out before with what unanimity and bitterness they reproached me—apart from the ignorance in which I was accused of having left my Government in regard to the candidature of Prince Leopold—with the little care I had taken, as they said, to control the relations between Russia and Prussia, to call attention to the close intimacy established between those two powers to our prejudice. This is what the *Journal des Débats* observed on this subject, adding nothing, for that matter, to what was related, in still more disobliging terms, by other organs of the Parisian press: "Light will be thrown on all these mysteries at the proper time. In the meanwhile, let us remember, that our Ambassadors at Berlin and St. Petersburg were ignorant of all, and that this understanding between the two sovereigns, which was to be so disastrous to us, was concluded before their eyes without them noticing anything. M. Benedetti did not have the least suspicion. . . ."

On what basis do such positive statements repose? We shall see how utterly unfounded

they were. When my correspondence has been gone into it will be established as a matter of fact that, at every moment since 1866, I noted the incidents that revealed to me the harmony, becoming closer and more cordial, that was being established between the Courts of Prussia and Russia, that from these circumstances I obtained the proof of the existence between them of an understanding in regard to approaching contingencies. I shall be pardoned if I do not resist the desire to supply here an irrefutable demonstration of it. This is what I wrote on January 5th, 1868: "What distinguishes Count Bismarck, is not merely the rapidity of his resolutions; it is also his foresight and activity. He has understood that it would not suffice, to put his new plans into execution, to appease all internal dissensions, he has shown himself convinced that it is necessary also (after Sadowa) to protect himself against the discontent of France. For that purpose, and without losing a day, he has set about seeking security and an alliance at St. Petersburg.

"General von Manteuffel was suddenly recalled from the army and sent on a mission to the Emperor Alexander. What did the King's confidant do at St. Petersburg? . . . Nothing has placed Prussia under the necessity of divulging the arrangements she may have concerted with

Russia; but it is certain that General von Manteuffel resided for several weeks at the Imperial Court, and that since that time, the Russian Government has not ceased to observe an attitude that has been manifestly friendly in its relations with Prussia. Its representative at Berlin, who was so much alarmed by the success of the Prussian arms, and who did not conceal his anxiety, was, in his turn, summoned to St. Petersburg; he returned, a few weeks later, entirely reassured and affecting an attitude of satisfaction which was no more departed from. . . . All these events *are recorded in my correspondence;* I nevertheless recall them because coupled with ulterior incidents, they show there exists an understanding between St. Petersburg and Berlin. . . . The English Ambassador here for a long time refused to admit that the agreement between Prussia and Russia should be regarded with uneasiness. For some time past, his views have become considerably modified, and at present he is not less persuaded than other members of the diplomatic body, that contingent arrangements have been made between the Governments of King William and the Emperor Alexander. For my part, I have discovered the *permanent demonstration*, if I may so express myself, in the firm resolution of the Berlin Cabinet to prepare German unity without allowing itself to be turned

aside for an instant by the possibility of a conflict with France. . . ."

Apart from producing the written proof of the bonds uniting Russia and Prussia, it seems to me that it would have been difficult to explain myself on this subject with greater care and emphasis.

The *Journal des Débats* therefore was as ill-informed as its contemporaries, and its good faith was strangely led astray when it affirmed that I had seen nothing, and learnt nothing of what was passing before my eyes.

At what moment—it is necessary to note and retain this—did I make it such a constant practice to call attention to the relations springing up between the Cabinets of Berlin and St. Petersburg? The page you have just read was written by me in January 1868, thirty months before the war, and it will be observed that I refer to previous despatches written in the same sense and in the same line of thought.

No one will ever know what I have suffered, the bitterness in which my mind has been so long and so pitilessly steeped, the anguish in which I have lived for several years. My grief was all the more keen as I had the conviction of having shown myself worthy of the confidence that had been placed in me when I was appointed to the Embassy at Berlin, and my hands are full of proofs bearing witness to it.

Unable to endure the torments that encompassed me, and taking my inspiration from my patriotism as much as from feelings of self-esteem, I decided, in the year 1871, to appeal from an opinion deceived by organs that had an interest to lead it astray to an opinion better informed, and I resolved to put together, in a volume,[1] the important despatches I had penned from Berlin, and to add to them the whole of the correspondence I had exchanged with M. de Gramont during my mission to Ems. I nursed the illusion, which, however, was very natural, that by placing all the documents in the case before my readers, I should set public opinion right again and obtain the reparation due to me.

These documents, in fact, established beyond doubt, not only that I had not been surprised at the candidature of the Prussian Prince, but further that I had not been mistaken, at any time during my long residence at Berlin, as to the real intentions of the Government to which I was accredited, any more than I had been as to the intrigues of Count Bismarck ; that I had on the contrary, observed them with the greatest care ; that, finally, I had given almost a daily account of them. To prove this, it will suffice for me to reproduce here the conclusion of the despatch from which I recently quoted a first

[1] *Ma Mission en Prusse.*

extract. After having grouped together all the elements of information authorising me to believe that they aimed, in Berlin, at the restoration of the German Empire, whilst acknowledging to themselves that they could only attain that end after having placed France, by a successful war, in the impossibility to raise an obstacle to it, I added in concluding: ". . . We must not dissemble: public feeling in Germany, generally, has urged the Prussian Government to enter on the path along which it is now advancing. Union first of all, then liberty, such has been the programme of the National Party, comprising all shades of moderate Liberals, since it has been able to form an idea of the importance attendant on the success obtained by the Prussian armies; and it is with transports of enthusiasm and hatred that it would second the King's Government in a war against France. There are *Particularists*[1] in Germany. . . . There exists, in some secondary States, an invincible feeling of aversion for everything connected with the Prussian Government. . . . But at the outset of a national war, the most stubborn of those who share this feeling would be obliged to abstain from indulging in it; they would have to give way before the masses who would applaud

[1] Adherents to a political party in Germany who wish the different States forming the German Empire to maintain their independence and their own institutions.—*Translator.*

at the conflict whilst passionately imposing on themselves the sacrifices that would be imposed on them. The German populations, in general, would regard the struggle, whatever the circumstances under which it broke out, as a French war of aggression against their country; and if the fate of arms were favourable to them, their exactions would know no limits; they would equal those of Prussia, which have always been so difficult to satisfy each time she has been victorious. We should therefore have to keep up a formidable war in which a whole people at the outset would take part against us. I here close this explanatory summary, which I recommend rather to your indulgence than to your attention."

I resumed in these few words: "German union will soon be accomplished; ought we to accept it? If so, do not let us conceal the fact that we shall give it a kindly welcome. . . . In the contrary event, let us prepare for war without respite, and let us form a clear idea as to what assistance Austria is likely to be to us. . . . We shall need all our forces to ensure victory on the Rhine; the campaign of 1866 has more than amply shown, by the defeat of the Austrian armies, the dangers of a struggle engaged in on either side of the Alps."

Does not this despatch show that I had long

since had a presentiment of the conflict, of Prussia's well-determined intention to provoke it, and had pointed out the obligations this contingency imposed on us? Could I have shown greater attention, greater forethought, have pointed out the dangers threatening us at a more seasonable time?

To prove that my convictions did not vary, that I persisted up to the last moment in the judgment I had expressed on the policy and calculations of the Prussian Cabinet, I will quote an extract from the last despatch I wrote from Berlin. The Emperor Alexander II. had just reached Ems; King William, followed by Count Bismarck, had hastened to join his guest. I had on more than one occasion, and notably in my report of January 5th, 1868, noted the efforts made with unswerving steadfastness by the German Chancellor to cause a feeling to prevail at the Russian Court in accordance with his designs. On the occasion of the meeting of the two sovereigns, at which I was not present, this is how I thought I could sum up the views the King and his Prime Minister would give expression to:

"If I must confide to you," I wrote on June 30th, 1870, two weeks before the opening of hostilities, "my personal impressions, I will say that it suffices to remember what was the

thought of the Berlin Cabinet in constantly exerting itself to strengthen its intimate relations with that of St. Petersburg, to form an idea of the object the King had in view in proceeding to Ems, accompanied by the Chancellor, and of the interviews they have had with the Emperor Alexander. Count Bismarck, being of one frame of mind in this respect with his Sovereign, has invariably sought to ensure the eventual concurrence of Russia in their views. With that aim he has shown himself, on the one hand, favourable to the policy of the St. Petersburg Cabinet in the East; on the other hand he has not ceased to awaken susceptibilities in regard to questions that agitate national feeling in Russia. I have no fear of being in error in presuming that he has been careful to give his views on the state of affairs in the Principalities, and in all the Levant, so as to please the Emperor; and he cannot have failed to point out the tendency of the Vienna Cabinet to re-establish autonomy in Polish Galicia. Whilst the Minister will have assumed the task of setting the Emperor at ease on the first of these two points, and of alarming him on the other, the King will have displayed that good grace which he has always known how to turn to such wonderful account, to captivate the kindly feelings of his august nephew; and I have no doubt, for my part, that, together,

they have produced on his mind the impressions they desired. . . .

"It must not, however, be supposed that Count Bismarck considers it advisable to bind his policy closely to that of the Russian Cabinet. My views are that he has not contracted and is not disposed to make any engagement likely to cause him difficulties or to weaken him on the Rhine. The Chancellor's complacency towards Russia will never be of such a nature as to limit his liberty of action; he promises, as a matter of fact more than he intends to perform, or in other words he seeks the alliance of the St. Petersburg Cabinet in order to have the benefit of it in the event of a conflict in the West. . . . And so I have always felt persuaded that no official engagement has ever been made between the two Courts. . . ."

Ulterior events, and particularly the resolutions that the Chancellor caused to prevail at the Berlin Congress, when Russia was pitilessly sacrificed, have entirely justified my conjectures, however premature they may have been at the time I put them in writing. In regard to this matter, again, was I wanting in foresight, and was I mistaken as to Count Bismarck's real intentions? But what my readers will retain above all, is that, from 1866 until the last moment of my stay at Berlin, I have never, at any time, omitted to set forth in my correspondence not merely the calculations I

felt justified in considering the Prussian Government was making, but its ceaseless efforts to ensure the neutrality of Russia and eventually its armed co-operation, if Austria determined to give assistance to France in the ensuing war.

Since Austria had been expelled from Germany, they had had but one object at Berlin, that of uniting the Southern States to the Confederation of the North and of re-establishing the Imperial Crown for the benefit of the House of Hohenzollern. They would not hesitate at war if recourse to arms became necessary. In the meanwhile they were preparing to attain their end in a military sense, by making the armies as powerful as possible; diplomatically, by displaying dazzling perspectives at St. Petersburg, which, although fallacious, were sufficient to convince the Sovereign he could rely on a kindly attitude, and if occasion offered on active support, particularly in view of keeping a check on Austria. That is just what I was constantly pointing out, and my volume, *Ma Mission en Prusse*, is swarming with indications bearing testimony to my vigilance and to my eagerness to collect every kind of information in regard to the frame of mind and aims of the Prussian Government.

Did I err at Ems? Did I mistake the King's real intentions and the nature of my instructions?

Did I imprudently create the incidents that permitted Count Bismarck to hurl the two countries in arms against one another? What interest had we in this affair, what could we, what ought we to exact? First of all, the desistance of Prince Leopold. It was granted us. Was it necessary and advisable to obtain that the King should impose it on him and enter into an engagement with us? M. de Gramont thought so, and I was not of his opinion. It is not the place here to enumerate the reasons of this disagreement: they are, however, easy to guess. What it is of importance for me to add, is that the King consented to give his personal and sovereign assent to the Prince's determination, and communicate it to us, thus sharing the responsibility of his nephew's declaration. I thought, for my part, that this solution gave us most entire satisfaction, without any prejudice to the dignity of either party, and consequently that it was acceptable on both sides.

During the whole course of these negotiations nothing occurred to disturb the courtesy with which they were carried on. It is necessary I should repeat here, that at Ems there was neither an insulter nor a person insulted. Questioned at Baden, on this subject, some years later, the King replied: "M. Benedetti performed his duty correctly; nothing more."

There was a change in the aspect of things on July 13th, due to the communication which I received orders to make to the King at the last moment, and also to a despatch from his Ambassador at Paris. I was instructed on the night of July 12th, to solicit the King's verbal assurance that he would not authorise Prince Leopold to accept the offer he had just declined in case it were made to him again. Baron Werther, on his side, became the intermediary of another desire, *which was not communicated to me:* it was a question of deciding the King to write the Emperor a letter conceived in such terms as would appease the irritation the incident had provoked in France. The King rejected my last overture, and gave orders to inform Count Bismarck of these final phases of our conferences. The despatch prepared with that view bears the same date, day and hour, as that in which I announced to M. de Gramont that the King gave his approbation to Prince Hohenzollern's desistance, whilst authorising me to notify the same to the Emperor's Government. Had it not been for the last wish that I was requested to express to the King and the desire that the Prussian Ambassador at Paris consented to transmit to his sovereign, the despatch destined for Count Bismarck would merely have announced the closure of this discussion, and the text, in that case, would not

have undergone the criminal alterations of which the Chancellor has boldly assumed the responsibility. My mission would therefore have been happily fulfilled, and war averted.

Consequently no more at Ems than at Berlin had I in any way betrayed the confidence of my Government. I therefore had reason to think, that my volume would throw a brilliant light on the way in which I had acquitted myself of my professional duties, and cause the most prejudiced to modify their opinions in my favour. Nothing of the kind occurred. I had not made allowance for passions, particularly for legend, that occult power which exercises such baleful influence on the credulity of the masses. A few earnest men, desirous of gaining information, were struck with the authority of my revelations and so expressed themselves to me. But the general public, who read little or not at all, who have formed their opinion and abide by it, showed me no consideration. A new trouble was added to the others, that of seeing writers worthy of all esteem abstain, with the exception of Jules Favre,[1] from relieving me of the accusations brought against me.

I incurred even another reproach. I had, they said, overlooked a duty of the first order in diplomacy, I had failed to maintain professional

[1] See *Le Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale*, vol. ii., p. 349.

secrecy. M. de Gramont, in his book, *La France et la Prusse avant la Guerre*, made himself the authorised mouthpiece of this charge. "An agent or a functionary," he wrote, "should submit to pass as unskilful and thoughtless; it matters little for his country's future if his reputation as a talented man be eclipsed."[1] This opinion is at least controvertible; is it not rather permissible to think that a Minister, conscious of his duty, can always protect a servant placed under his orders against accusations which touch his honour and concern the welfare of the country? "The Government," he said again, "considered it should preserve silence for the moment," and he recalls the pressing requests I had sent him from Ems to contradict rumours that were injurious to the esteem in which I wished to be held. He therefore intended to deny them. If he failed to acquit himself of that task, how could he blame me for doing so? Besides, when did I publish the documents in my possession? When the Government which I had served, and which could have screened and rehabilitated me in the eyes of the public, had already been overthrown; when peace had been concluded; when there was no longer any peril for public interest; when there was, on the contrary, every advantage in revealing the truth, in making it all known. Were

[1] Page 2.

the despatches I made use of with this aim in view, still, at that moment, discreetly hidden in the cardboard boxes at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs? By no means. They had, for the most part, been handed to the Committee appointed by the National Assembly to proceed to an inquiry into the acts of the Provisional Government. M. de Gramont appeared before it as I did; he could convince himself that our correspondence was no longer a secret or a mystery for any one, that it had become public property. I could therefore decline all responsibility in this respect; I will do nothing of the kind, considering that real independence of character, that the first of all duties, consists in claiming the share of responsibility one has incurred and in appealing to the judgment of one's fellow citizens.

I took but one step before deciding definitely what I would do. I solicited the Emperor's consent, and I carried him the first proof sheets of my book over to England. "I fully authorise you to publish it," he answered me. "The documents it contains will be evidence for future historians of these unhappy times; they will supply them with indispensable elements to thoroughly establish that our diplomacy, whatever may have been said of it, has never set deceitful snares anywhere. Relying on our own loyalty, we have had confidence in the loyalty of others,

and that error has been the origin of all our disasters."

What results from these circumstances which I have had to recall, in order to respond to the reproach pronounced by M. de Gramont? That I have published diplomatic documents which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had parted with, and that in doing so I was protected by the Sovereign to whose intentions my acts and conduct had been obedient, as duty commanded.

Disappointed in my hope of bringing national feeling back to a more healthy and enlightened appreciation of events, I became resigned and waited until time, that ineludible redresser of public errors, could do so efficaciously. It was during this period that, in my painful anxiety, I penned the pages reproduced in this volume. I was supported and encouraged, in that work, not only by my ardent desire to contribute towards making the truth manifest, but also by new publications, due to the investigations of laborious and sincere writers who threw fresh light on the origin and causes of the events that have been so fatal to us. I was also buoyed up by indiscretions that came from all sides, by those which Count Bismarck considered he could indulge in, in the guest-chamber among his familiar friends, thus revealing his inward strategy and increasing his importance in their eyes. These indiscretions,

more or less well combined, were repeated outside and commented on. They were confided to certain organs of publicity. From that moment the veil was rent asunder in the opinion of independent and conscientious persons, and I received consoling proofs of it.

The newspapers, especially foreign newspapers, who had had faith in Count Bismarck's word, who had, after and with him, obstinately pretended that France had wished for war at any price and provoked the conflict, the whole press in fact, led astray by the Chancellor of the Empire, felt, nevertheless, reluctant to recognise that it had been his dupe, and it persisted in the opinion it had made its readers share. The masses were thus kept in the first error: France, people continued to say, by making herself the aggressor deserved the reverse inflicted on her, and her diplomacy was the first at fault.

It required the stormy and haughty intervention of Count Bismarck himself, it needed the audacity he displayed in claiming the benefit of an act of treachery, to open all eyes, to implant the conviction in every conscience that the war was exclusively his personal work, that he had willed it, and that he had had, to use his own expression, the good fortune to impose it on his own Sovereign as well as on the French Government.

All remember the echo of that unexpected

explosion, that story of three Germans seated round a dinner table mutually elated at the thought of crushing the Gaul, in turn delighted or in dismay accordingly as the struggle appeared imminent or the affair seemed likely to end in smoke. The details of the incident will be found in this volume reproduced from the Chancellor's own version.

Is there any necessity to recall with what surprise and indignation Europe suddenly heard Count Bismarck claim his due? The London newspapers, unable any longer to disguise the fact that he had imposed on their good faith, spared him neither invectives nor recriminations. An important organ of the Berlin press declared that it felt the keenest shame in acknowledging that not only it but the whole of Germany, had been impudently deceived by the highest representative of the King and Country. I have nothing to say that is not present to every mind anent the painful and irritable feeling provoked in France by this incident; but I shall be permitted to mention that it was universally acknowledged that I had not deserved any of the accusations that had been so obstinately, and so generally laid to my charge. I am thus indebted to Count Bismarck for having recovered, along with public esteem and consideration, the peace of mind which I had lost.

In the history of the events of this period, three points, three questions, have particularly exercised public opinion. Presented, from the commencement, under a deceitful aspect by Count Bismarck, they contributed to form that erroneous opinion which so long prevailed.

Of these three points, the first in date, that of ascertaining who insisted on and provoked the war, who will have to assume all the responsibility of it in the eyes of posterity, has been enlightened by Count Bismarck himself. The matter is settled.

The second, which is really the corollary of the first, may be resumed in these terms: Did the Prussian Government take an active part in the candidature of Prince Leopold? Was it their work, and did they conceive it with the idea of aggression, with the design of making the conflict, foreseen and desired, result from it? Or was the Government a stranger to the incident, as has always been maintained at Berlin, "looking upon the matter as a family affair in which they took no interest"?

At present we know the whole truth in respect to this. Last year a book of the utmost interest[1]

[1] *Aus dem Leben König Karls von Rumanien*, Aufzeichnungen eines Augenzeugen. 2 vols. The work has been epitomized in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* by M. Valbert, who, with his smart analytic talent, has placed the precious revelations it contains in bright relief.

appeared at Stuttgart; it is the story of the private life of King Charles of Roumania, and is rich in documentary information in the form of the private correspondence of that Prince with his family, and particularly with his father. There is no author's name to the work; but the person who wrote or published it has been the recipient of all the confidences he could have desired to interest his readers. And yet, although the information which the author divulges to the public is full of family and personal details, although the subjects of general politics on which he touches are very important, and notwithstanding that he often brings forward Count Bismarck and King William, there has been no denial or rectification. Under these circumstances it is permissible to conclude that the exactitude of the historical facts, with which the book is teeming, is beyond doubt. We may, therefore, pause and glean from it the irrefutable evidence by which a point of contemporaneous history that has hitherto given rise to much controversy is enlightened.

When a fortuitous incident aroused my attention in 1869, and put me on the trace of the underhand dealing they were engaged in at Berlin, I questioned Herr von Thiele, Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in the absence of Count Bismarck, on the subject of Prince Hohenzollern's candidature. This functionary, who possessed

the Chancellor's entire confidence, returned me a clear and categorical answer. "Herr von Thiele," I wrote, "has given me the most formal assurance that he has not, at any time, had knowledge of any sort of indication that could authorise such a conjecture. The Under Secretary of State, without my having said anything to provoke such a manifestation, thought proper to engage his word of honour." [1]

I nevertheless considered it necessary to question Count Bismarck himself, as soon as he returned to Berlin. The Chancellor was not so discreet as the Under Secretary. He made no difficulty about acknowledging that my information was correct: "'The sovereignty that would be offered to Prince Leopold,' he said to me, 'could only be of ephemeral duration, and would expose him to more dangers than mistakes. The King being convinced of this would certainly advise him to abstain from acquiescing in the vote of the Cortes. The Prince's father shares this view.' Fancying that Count Bismarck had not expressed *his whole thought to me*, I pointed out to him that as Prince Leopold could not comply with the wish of the Cortes without the King's approval, his Majesty would have to dictate to the Prince the resolution he would, under such circumstances, have to take. Count Bismarck acknowledged

[1] Archives of Foreign Affairs. Despatch of March 31st, 1869.

this, but instead of assuring me that the King was irrevocably decided to recommend him to abstain, he returned to the question of the perils with which the new sovereign of Spain would be encompassed from the moment he ascended the throne. . . . However it may be," I said in conclusion, " I cannot, as you see, place implicit confidence in the explanations that were given me by the President of the Council, and if I had not feared to exceed the limit that the Emperor's Government may be disposed to go to in such a delicate matter, I should have requested Count Bismarck, without failing in any of my duties, to express himself more clearly ; but I thought I ought to await your orders before becoming more pressing and insisting further to be definitely informed as to the eventual resolutions that might be taken at Berlin." [1]

What happens, indeed, shortly afterwards, and what became of the first overtures, the avowal of which I had wrung from the Chancellor of the Northern Confederation ? The correspondence of Prince Anthony with his son, the King of Roumania, reveals it. It tells us a Spanish deputy, Señor Salazar, had been entrusted with the mission of sounding the Hohenzollern Princes. He was introduced to them at one of their castles, in November, 1869, by Herr von Werther,

[1] Archives of Foreign Affairs. Despatch of May 11th, 1869.

then Prussian Minister in Bavaria, who would certainly not have performed such a delicate duty without a formal order from Count Bismarck, who was thus following out his design. The suggestion was unfavourably received by Prince Anthony and his three sons. General Prim's emissary, in his desire to contribute toward giving Spain a sovereign, offered the crown to each of them successively and in vain, even to King Charles himself.

Señor Salazar left discouraged. He had, however, acquired the certitude that he would, in case of need, meet with powerful support on the banks of the Spree. After a few weeks' residence at Madrid, he reappeared in Germany; this was in January, 1870. He did not go, as on the occasion of his first visit, to the south where the Hohenzollern Princes reside. Changing his itinerary, he arrived direct at Berlin, with letters from the Regency for the King of Prussia, for the hereditary Prince of Hohenzollern, and for Count Bismarck. On May 1st following, Prince Anthony announced this new apparition of the Spanish messenger to King Charles. He did better, he came himself to Berlin, accompanied by the eldest of his sons, apparently in answer to an invitation he could not decline. At the same moment, Count Bismarck called his Sovereign's attention to a report tending to show how

advantageous it would be to Germany, to place a Hohenzollern prince on the Spanish throne. "It would be an inestimable advantage for her," he said, "to have a friend south of the Pyrenees, in the rear of France."

Prince Leopold, however, hesitated. The Crown Prince of Prussia, giving proof, on this occasion, of his upright feelings, animated his relative's scruples and encouraged him to persist in his desire to escape from the affair. The King himself dreaded the adventure proposed to him. But he soon gave way to pressure, and left the matter to his nephew's free decision, showing himself disposed to acquiesce in it, whatever it might be. Vanquished by the persistent arguing of his Prime Minister, he consented to act the part of the worthy head of a family, on condition that his sovereign responsibility would not be pledged. He imagined, or rather they had persuaded him, that by intervening in his quality of first Prince of the house of Hohenzollern, he in no way implicated the King of Prussia. That was the thesis on which he was shortly to take a stand at Ems. Here are the terms in which Prince Anthony relates these incidents: "Bismarck," he wrote on March 20th, "desires acceptance for dynastic and *political* reasons; the King only desires it, if Leopold so decides, of his own free will. On the 15th we held a very interesting and important

conference, presided over by the King, and at which the Crown Prince, Bismarck, Roon, Moltke, Schleinitz, Thiele, and Delbrück were present. These gentlemen unanimously decided to recommend us to accept, as by doing so we should be performing *a patriotic duty to Prussia.* After some hard fighting Leopold, for more than one reason, refused. . . ."

They then conceived the idea of putting forward his second brother, Prince Frederick, in his place. "One perceives clearly," M. Valbert justly remarks, "that it was no longer a question, at this juncture, of family interest, of providing for an elder or younger son, but of performing a duty to Prussia, of a political combination that was to have grave and important consequences." However, it was not Prince Frederick who definitely became candidate for the Spanish crown, it was Prince Leopold himself, who, circumvented by the King's advisers, and more particularly by Count Bismarck, suddenly changed his mind and consented to the proposal of the Spanish Regency, "*the most competent* of the judges having made it clear to him that the interest of the State required it."

Compendious though these rapid indications be, do they not superabundantly prove that the candidature of Prince Leopold was regarded by Count Bismarck as a means of causing

difficulties to France of a political and international order?—that it was brought forward long in advance and discussed from the point of view of German interests, "with a determined object (*mit einem bestimmten Zweck*)," as the Crown Prince observed when arousing his cousin's distrust?—that it was, in a word, looked upon as a fortuitous event, favourable to the ambitious calculations which already, in 1869, haunted statesmen and warriors at Berlin? Decided on provoking a conflict with France, they required a plausible pretext to force us into it; the overtures of the Regency at Madrid supplied them with what was wanting, and they hastened to lay hands on it. We have seen how stubbornly Count Bismarck caused his schemes to be accepted by the King on the one hand, by the Hohenzollern Princes on the other, constraining, with the aid of Generals von Roon and von Moltke, every will to bend to his own. The King of Prussia's Prime Minister was therefore the chief labourer at this underhand machination which concealed an intrigue, a snare set for the good faith of France. He knew very well that the accession of a German Prince to the throne of Charles V. would be an adventure of brief duration; he had made no difficulty in admitting it in his conversations with me in May, 1869. But his design was not to place the Spanish crown

on the head of a Hohenzollern whose fate, whatever it might be, did not interest him beyond all measure; he had another aim, that of setting France and Germany at each other. Count Bismarck and the chiefs of the army, consistent with their principles, bent on the same object, could not fail, from the moment they were of opinion that war alone could ensure the triumph of the policy of which they were the organs or rather the inspirers, could not fail, I say, to seek an opportunity to bring it about. It was in that line of thought that they showed themselves unanimous in *advising acceptance;* but henceforth, in face of the revelations supplied by Prince Anthony's correspondence, it would be offending public conscience, if any one still dared pretend that the German Government remained a stranger to the negotiations carried on between Madrid and Berlin, and that the candidature offered and accepted was never anything more than a *family affair* discussed exclusively between the Spanish Regency and the House of Hohenzollern.

Thus of the three questions to which I called the attention of my readers two are absolutely elucidated. The first, that of learning which of the belligerents of 1870 wished for war and rendered it inevitable, has been decided by Count Bismarck himself with such an explosion and

such evidence, that there can be no longer any doubt on the subject. The second, namely, that which concerns the character and object of Prince Leopold's candidature, is solved in an equally clear and irrefutable manner by Prince Anthony's correspondence with the King of Roumania. One has shown, let us say it without fear of repeating ourselves, that the aim of his policy was a violent aggression of Germany against France; the other that the candidature of his son was, above all, destined to furnish the pretext, having never been considered as anything else than "the accomplishment of a patriotic duty to Prussia."

There remains the third question; I refer to the scheme for uniting Belgium to France. From the outbreak of the war Count Bismarck presented it to Europe with a display worthy of his skill. Speaking alone, and in his customary light-hearted fashion, he taxed France with ideas of covetousness that he had in vain endeavoured to drive into her head. In spite of the efforts I have made to place this affair, so insidiously disguised, in its real light, it remains obscure and confused to many worthy minds. Still I have published official documents of incontestable importance, establishing beyond a doubt that Count Bismarck on many occasions offered us compensations everywhere on our frontier where French

was spoken, and that, conforming to my instructions, I declined to discuss such a subject. He alone has placed this question in the dark; he alone can throw light on it; until conscientious writers are in a position to detach the truth from the documents that time will place at their disposal.

Come, Prince von Bismarck, edify us by an honest effort; make a final avowal, let one sincere word fall from your lips, and this time again there will be an end to all doubt. Instead of speaking of France with unseemly disdain, instead of calling the attention of the deputations who present you their homage, to the copy-books of our elementary schools, to our folly for conquests, instead of advising them to close the ranks and keep shoulder to shoulder, instead of feeding and exalting the hatred of two neighbouring peoples by such language, examine your own conscience. Who was it, if not Prussia, who in our times pursued and realised vast conquests? You made three wars in six years, sprinkled the bones of several hundreds of thousands of men from the Baltic to the banks of the Danube, from the Danube to the banks of the Loire; you issued triumphant from this triple struggle, loaded with titles, honours, rewards of every kind. History, assuredly, will not relate that you deserved well of humanity;

but you will none the less remain the prodigious man of our time. Your prestige was not seriously affected by your first revelations, and you have been able to tell Europe, without prejudice for the regard in which you are held, what use you could make of your pencil to convey to a communication from your Sovereign a feature and a bearing it did not possess. At each of your anniversaries Germany acclaims you with renewed fervour. Why should you not take the noble resolve to set matters straight in regard to those conversations into which you introduced the words Luxembourg, Belgium, and even the canton of Geneva—that French enclave, as you termed it. It will cost you less than to have assumed the responsibility of the last war, as your overtures produced no result.

On a recent occasion, replying to a group of notabilities from Leipzig, you freely expressed the opinion that Germany should continue closely united to Austria, "but that she is nevertheless bound to cultivate friendly intercourse with her eastern neighbour Russia," as that is necessary to her security. But this intercourse existed; it was cordial, intimate, family-like: it was you who upset it at the Berlin Congress; it was you who stripped Russia of all the advantages she had acquired by the treaty of San Stefano after a glorious war sustained at the cost of the greatest

sacrifices; it was you, again, who tried to give Austria the influence she exercised in the Lower Danube by assigning to that power Bosnia and Herzegovina which you had snatched from Turkey whose defender you had made yourself. If, on that occasion, you had joined your efforts to those of the plenipotentiaries of the Emperor Alexander II., that faithful prince who gave you his most generous co-operation, no one could have compelled him to renounce the concessions the Sultan had made to his conqueror. Russia would have been grateful, and her relations with Germany would have been strengthened and consolidated for long. But you had contracted a debt with her that it displeased you to discharge, as it displeased you, in 1866, to remember the assurances you had lavished on France, and accord her the compensations you had promised her. Those two powers have not forgotten this, and you cannot now fail to see that Germany is reaping at the present day the fruits of your ingratitude. How could so powerful a mind as yours, gifted with such lucid foresight, fall into so grave an error, and voluntarily break those precious bonds which, after having facilitated such vast conquests to Germany, would have guaranteed her the peaceful possession of them? That is for you to say. For my part, I limit myself to conjuring you to go the whole length, and

display your frankness even in regard to the Belgium affair.

Consider, Prince Bismarck, that truth, though it come sometimes late, like justice, always succeeds in piercing the obscurity devised to hide it. The force of circumstances sometimes constrains even those who have the least appreciated its value to assist in divulging it. It is thus that, in your speeches, in your circulars, you have never ceased affirming that the war of 1870 was imposed on Germany by a violent aggression of France. In September of that same year, in a first conference with M. Jules Favre, did you not hold this language to him: "I only want peace. It was not Germany who troubled it. You declared war on us without a motive, with the sole design of taking a portion of our territory . . ."? That was reversing the parts — acknowledge it. The following day, at the Château de Ferrières, did you not renew to him the same assurances? "I have no serious reason," you added, "to love Napoleon III. If he had liked, we could have been two sincere allies, and together we would have disposed of Europe,[1] but I would not fight him; I proved that in 1867, on the occasion of the Luxemburg affair. All those about the King were for war;

[1] That is to say, if the Emperor had consented to the proposals concerning Belgium, Luxemburg, and the Canton of Geneva.

I was the only one to reject it. . . . I merely tell you these things to show you that war was not to my taste : *I would certainly never have waged it had it not been declared against us,* and even when it was declared I could not believe it would occur. . . ." [1]

But there came a time when it pleased you to remind your young Emperor that he owed you his Imperial Crown, and, discarding the language you had invariably held for twenty years, you took upon yourself to inform your contemporaries that the reconstruction of the German Empire was your personal work, being the result of a war of which you were the principal author, and which would not have broken out without your intervention.

In the same way you, for a long time, accused France and her agents of having credited you, in regard to the candidature of Prince Leopold, with intentions and intrigues of which you were absolutely innocent. You pretended that this affair interested the House of Hohenzollern only, and that the Prussian Government had never at any moment given attention to it. The publication of Prince Anthony's correspondence upsets all your affirmations at a single stroke. You consented to, you supported the proposals of the

[1] See *Gouvernement de la Défense Nationale*, by Jules Favre, pages 165 and 170.

Regency of Madrid ; you imposed them because, in your state of feeling, they were most advantageous to your policy, because they could not fail to become the source of most grave difficulties for France. It was from this double point of view that your colleagues, after you, advised acceptance. This is now a matter so thoroughly established that you have not attempted to contradict it.

Why do you not take the wise resolution to pay the same homage to truth in the Belgium affair ? If you abstain from doing so, light will sooner or later be thrown on it, in spite of you and to the prejudice of your memory. The future historians of our times will multiply their investigations, and numerous documents have already appeared which will place them on the way to a sincere and truthful narrative. They will inquire what was the message you took to Biarritz when you went there ; you certainly made that journey to ensure the neutrality, if not the co-operation, of France in the war you meditated declaring against Austria. What was the price you intended paying for it ? What advantages did you offer the Emperor in compensation for your future aggrandisement ? You often opened your heart to me at that time on this grave subject, and you did not conceal from me that it would be extremely difficult to persuade King William

to make the sacrifice of any part of German territory. What you offered the Emperor Napoleon then was what you mentioned to me—territories bordering on our frontiers, the reunion of which to France you proposed to guarantee. You have certainly not forgotten that you held this language to me on more than one occasion, notably on the eve of the war of 1866, when you insisted so warmly on the advantage of arranging a threefold understanding, including Italy.

Do you remember having informed me on May 18th, that Major von Burg, who had gone to Paris, the bearer of a letter from the King to the Emperor, had returned to Berlin without having performed his mission, Herr von der Goltz, your ambassador, being of opinion that this communication was not quite opportune at that moment? Herr von der Goltz, you told me, had himself had an explanation with the Emperor and his Minister of Foreign Affairs, concerning the desire of the Prussian Government to arrange a preliminary understanding with France and Italy; but if he had been listened to with kindness, it would nevertheless have been impossible for him to persuade his Majesty to receive this overture favourably. At that moment, you were very uneasy, and in your anxiety you were lavish in confidences. "If the Emperor abandons us," you said to me, "by

refusing to concert with us, and if he facilitates the cession of Venice to the Italians, Prussia will stand alone in face of Austria. . . ." You were nevertheless full of hope in the valour and might of your troops, and you added: "If the King listens to me we shall fight; the army is superb; at no period has it been more numerous, more solidly organised, or better armed. I feel confident it will triumph over our enemies. . . ."[1]

Not many days afterwards war became imminent, Austria having declined the proposal of the Powers to assemble in Congress. You counted on attending this reunion of plenipotentiaries in person, and I wrote to M. Drouyn de Lhuys: "Count Bismarck will regret losing the opportunity it would have offered of showing himself at Paris. He would have desired to confer again with the Emperor and yourself. He mentioned to me yesterday, whilst expressing his anxiety as to our intentions, that he would have been very pleased to sound you before the opening of hostilities, especially in view of Prussia attaining great success, as he feels confident she will do. I gathered from what he said that the King still refuses to admit he could be led to cede a portion of the territory he actually holds to France. According to his

[1] Archives of Foreign Affairs. Despatch of May 19th, 1866.

Majesty, at least so Count Bismarck states, the compensations there might be occasion to offer to France, would have to be taken *anywhere where French is spoken on her frontiers.* The President of the Council had himself pointed out to his Sovereign that to dispose of this territory it would first of all be necessary to conquer it. It, however, escaped the President of the Council to say that if France claimed Cologne, Bonn, and even Mainz, he would prefer to disappear from the political stage rather than consent to the cession. Without my having pressed him, in any way, to explain himself further, he mentioned that he did not think it impossible to decide the King to hand us over the banks of the Upper Moselle which, with Luxemburg, would correct our frontier so as to give us entire satisfaction. I limited myself to answering him that Luxemburg was no more a property without a master than Belgium and certain cantons of Switzerland. Not wishing, however, to discuss these contingencies (being absolutely forbidden by my instructions to do so), nor to allow him to suppose that such arrangements would have any chance of being looked into at Paris, I broke up the conversation on this subject so as to let him understand that I did not wish to continue it. I cannot say whether Count Bismarck, in unbosoming himself to me in this matter, without having any

pretext for doing so, wished to sound me or to let you know from now, through my intermediary, what were the compensations he could offer us and what were those we should abstain from asking him for; but I should not be surprised if it were so, these sorts of expedients being very common with him." [1]

Have I reported your words incorrectly, and have I mistaken your real intentions? My belief that I have not done so finds additional strength in the fact of my being able to corroborate my own language by that of an auricular witness, whose sincerity is above suspicion, and who was at Berlin for the purpose of concerting with you and of associating the policy of his Government with yours. I refer to General Govone. He negotiated the Prusso-Italian treaty, and after its conclusion remained near you as the confidential agent of the Cabinet of Florence, touching upon all diplomatic and military questions in the interviews you had together and those he had with General von Moltke. His correspondence has been published by the Minister to whom it was addressed, General La Marmora, President of the Council. At the time when it appeared, you displayed the most lively, I might say, the most violent resentment. No one was surprised, for the letters of the Italian Emissary, like those of

[1] Archives of Foreign Affairs. Despatch of June 4th, 1866.

Prince Anthony, contained revelations calculated to annoy you.

In a report of May 7th, General Govone was already writing: "Count Bismarck desires to know the Emperor's intentions and wishes; he has spoken on the subject to Count Barral (the Italian Minister accredited to Berlin); he asked him to try and learn something through Commander Nigra. . . ." And the 22nd of the same month, three weeks before the outbreak of hostilities, you again said to him, as you had been continually repeating to me: "Six months ago, when I spoke to the Emperor of what is now taking place, he appeared satisfied at certain arrangements which also suited Prussia; now that we are on the eve of the event, and it is the moment to conclude *more* POSITIVE *conventions*, he absolutely refuses to have any explanation." "I then resumed," adds General Govone: "'But the whole of Europe says openly what the wishes of France are; perhaps those of the Emperor are the same.' Count Bismarck replied: 'In all this affair it is a question of Prussia acquiring preponderance in a part of Germany and of attaching this latter to her by certain bonds. To obtain such advantages, can Prussia and the King cede to France these vast provinces which are of German blood? It would be much more satisfactory for the Emperor to

obtain the . . .'" For the name that certainly follows these last words in General Govone's report, they have placed dots instead of publishing it; but every one has understood that this name was that of the Kingdom of Belgium. The answer your interlocutor gave you allows of no doubt in that respect; he replied, indeed, that the . . . (here dots again appear) had "such a vigorous vitality of its own and such a pronounced sentiment of autonomy, that the matter might be sufficiently difficult for the Emperor not to be tempted by it. . . ." Can these observations apply to Luxemburg? Does there exist on the French eastern or northern frontier, another country, apart from Belgium, having *such a vigorous vitality of its own, and such a pronounced sentiment of autonomy?*

Thus the language you held to the representatives of Italy does not differ from what you said to me, which proves you were, at that moment, perfectly sincere: the same desire to concert with France, to conclude *positive conventions* with her; the same difficulty in inducing the King to make a sacrifice on the Rhine; the same suggestion to buy us out with French-speaking countries. I could quote other extracts from my own correspondence, from that of General Govone, or from that of the official representatives of Italy in France and at Berlin, showing you never

varied either in your speech or proceedings. I will limit myself here to reminding you that you persevered in the same views, when the Prussian Army was already at the gates of Vienna. Thanks to our intervention, you opened negotiations with the Austrian plenipotentiaries. I had, then, to remind you that, in presence of the aggrandisements of Prussia and in accordance with the assurances you had not ceased to renew at Paris, the moment was approaching when it would be advisable for you to come to an understanding with the Imperial Government in regard to the compensations due to France, and I did not hide from you that those compensations could not be conceded elsewhere than on the Rhine. What was the objection you made? The difficulty of inducing the King; and you resumed your favourite theme, that of establishing the new equilibrium by making the sacrifices it necessitated weigh on other States bordering on France. My official correspondence, lying in the Archives of Foreign Affairs bears testimony to this in the most explicit manner, as it reproduces your language. After a first conference which we had at Brünn, I wrote in fact to Paris: ". . . . The President of the Council made no difficulty in owning to me (replying to my observations on the importance of the acquisitions Prussia was aiming at, and which at that moment comprised Saxony) that

the instructions sent to Herr von der Goltz on that subject were in no way peremptory; that their principal object was to *combine an understanding with the Emperor's Government;* they authorised him to effect a compromise by regulating Prussia's pretensions according to what France might name as the price for *concerting with her*. . . . Count Bismarck particularly insisted on the propriety of the two countries *uniting and understanding one another*. . . . Following the same order of ideas, and going further still, *without any encouragement on my part*, he endeavoured to prove to me that the Austrian reverses permitted France and Prussia *to modify their territorial position*. . . . I reminded him of the existence of treaties, and that the war which he desired to avert would be the first result of such a policy. Count Bismarck answered that I was mistaken, that Prussia and France united, and resolved to correct their respective frontiers, by binding one another *by formal engagements*,[1] were in a position to settle these questions together without fear of encountering armed resistance on the part of either England or Russia——" [2]

Already, at that moment, and I noted it in my

[1] It has been seen on a previous page, that Count Bismarck himself reminded M. Jules Favre of these offers and combinations at the Château de Ferrières.

[2] Archives of Foreign Affairs. Despatch of July 15th, 1866.

correspondence, your design was evidently to give me to understand that the success of the Prussian armies became a fresh obstacle to the advantages that might have been conceded to us on the Rhine previous to the war. A few days afterwards, and whilst we were at Nikolsburg, I received orders to sound you on this subject. What did you say to me? That it would be difficult for you to induce the King, conqueror of Austria, to abandon to us any part of Prussian territory; that in any case you would have to prepare him for it, and that the compensations we considered it just to obtain might, perhaps, be found in the Palatinate. You were however inclined to think that it would be preferable to concert together on other bases, and for another combination, the one you had often spoken to me of; and in informing my Government of the way in which you had received my communication I concluded my despatch thus:—"I shall be conveying nothing new to your Excellency in announcing to him that Count Bismarck is of opinion that we should seek it (the compensation) *in Belgium, and that he offered to come to an understanding with you.*" [1]

You will admit that I have no need to demonstrate at greater length that previous to the war of 1866 but one voice was raised, your own, to

[1] Archives of Foreign Affairs. Despatch of July 26th, 1866.

suggest the annexation of Belgium to France. What was then the Emperor's feeling? Did he show an inclination to enter into your views, and employ force to shelter the frontiers of France by advancing them towards the north? The Emperor certainly desired the solution of the Venetian question, which would have crowned the work of emancipation for which France had fought; but he dreaded war, and he declined all overtures, yours especially, that would have forced him to participate in it. He ardently desired the maintenance of peace, and had no other object in negotiating, at Vienna, the cession of Venice, which Austria made to him so that it might be restored to Italy. I can, in this respect, appeal to your own testimony. Did you not say, in fact, on May 29th, to Count Barral *with profound dissatisfaction*, long before the outbreak of hostilities: "The Emperor of the French now wants peace at any price"? Such was also Commander Nigra's conviction. On May 28th he informed General La Marmora: "The Emperor decides for the Congress; he now desires it sincerely, and is loyally and conscientiously endeavouring to bring it about . . . ." And on the 31st of the same month he wrote again: "The Emperor decidedly prefers a peaceful solution. He formally told me so yesterday evening."[1]

[1] For all the quotations from the correspondence of the Italian

I was therefore the organ of my Sovereign's intentions when I declined to follow you on the ground where you insisted on keeping the discussion concerning the compensations claimed by France; and you had no better fortune at Paris than at Berlin in seeking an interlocutor disposed to listen to you. In this respect there is no room for doubt for the period which preceded 1866. Let us see if it was otherwise after the re-establishment of peace with Austria. You have pretended that it was so, with a wealth of affirmations and transpositions of dates admirably conceived to lead public opinion astray. I set your errors right in a volume to which I could refer.[1] You will permit me, however, to pause an instant.

On our arrival at Berlin, returning from Nikolsburg, we resumed our conferences. After having withdrawn the draft of a treaty concerning an important rectification of the Rhenish frontier, the bases of which you had declined to accept, I wished to obtain an exact statement of the proposals you had over and over again put forward. It was thus that we came to draw out, in your study, the draft of a convention, for which purpose I held the pen and which disposed con-

agents, see General La Marmora's volume : *Un più po di luce*, Chaps. XIII., XIV., XV. and XVI.

[1] *Ma Mission en Prusse*, pp. 147 and following.

tingently of Belgium.[1] I forwarded it to Paris as your work, as a very precise indication of the arrangements which, according to you, might be concluded between France and Prussia, and thus unite the two countries in lasting harmony by the aid of *formal engagements*. How was it received? A letter from the Emperor, discovered among the papers at the Tuileries and published by the

[1] How, it will be asked, could I lend myself to this discussion, so far as to fix, with Count Bismarck, the essential points of an understanding, despite the recommendations of my Government? I have no difficulty at present in giving the reason. Having been a witness of the ambitious views that were manifested each day more clearly, I was very soon convinced, particularly after the defeats of Austria, that the Prussian Government would actively apply itself to subjugate the whole of the German States without distinction, those of the south like those of the north, to the hegemony of Prussia and thus form the German Empire. My correspondence proves it, as has been seen from the extracts I have given. Already from August 25th, 1866, I had been able to send to Paris the table of the army of the Northern Confederation, the effective of which attained eight hundred thousand men, in official figures, which were in no way fantastical, as was pretended at the Tribune of the Corps Législatif to combat the proposals of Marshal Niel, who had given attention to the information transmitted by the Embassy and military *attaché* whilst elaborating it. It was evident to me that Prussia, so powerfully armed, pushing forward her aggrandisements to their utmost limits, was about to become the preponderant power on the European continent. The acquisitions she had already realised, and those she was preparing to make, brought before my mind the troubled vision of coming events. From that moment I was persuaded that France would find herself relatively deprived of her rank and that her security would be in peril, unless she obtained equivalent compensations. On June 8th, before the outbreak of the war of 1866, I had written to M. Drouyn de Lhuys, who had questioned me on this subject: "I know only of Count Bismarck who is familiarised with the thought that it might be to Prussia's interest to make us a territorial

Government of National Defence—a document which is consequently irrefutable — settles the matter completely. I cannot do better than place it before your eyes. Here it is :—

"*August 26th*, 1866.

"My dear Monsieur Rouher,

"I send you the draft treaty with my remarks on the margin. It is necessary to add, in the form of conversation, that the Germanic Confederation having ceased to exist, the federal

concession, and then he would only consent to correct the frontiers common to both countries. But the King, like the most humble of his subjects, would not tolerate, at this moment, the least suggestion of the possibility of a sacrifice of this nature." After Sadowa, I felt even more convinced that King William would not agree to grant us any important advantage on the banks of the Rhine. In accordance with fresh instructions, I nevertheless, at the commencement of August, proposed a rectification of frontier in that direction. Count Bismarck rejected my communication without allowing me an opportunity to resume it.

Therefore, to my mind, the equilibrium of power, upset by the acquisitions of Prussia, could only be re-established by the aid of the union to France of adjoining countries. It was under the influence of that conviction that I took upon myself to confer with Count Bismarck on the bases of his own constant overtures. I admitted that Luxemburg could be acquired without delay, by aid of an understanding with the King of Holland, and that we should be justified in proceeding, *later on*, with Prussia's co-operation, to the reunion of France and Belgium. I of course reserved to the Imperial Government the right to examine the idea and form an opinion in respect to it. It was thus that I was led to engage in this negotiation. If my patriotic feelings were misled, I cannot, even now, attach to myself any blame. The thought that guided me, the legitimate apprehensions in which I found my inspiration and which were only too well founded, absolve me entirely, if I am not mistaken, in the eyes of my fellow countrymen.

fortresses erected against France should no longer belong to the Confederation, but to each state that has them in its territory. Thus Luxemburg to France, Mainz and Saarlouis to Prussia, Landau to Bavaria, Rastadt to Baden, Ulm to Wurtemburg.

"In regard to another matter, I think Prussia is raising a good many quibbles with Saxony. Would it not be better for Prussia to annex Saxony, which is a Protestant country, and place the King of Saxony on the left bank of the Rhine, a Catholic country?

"But all this should only be insinuated amicably. The treaty must remain secret. The question of Luxemburg will come out of itself as soon as the negotiations begin. That is the most pressing.

"Believe, my dear Rouher, in my sincere friendship,

"NAPOLÉON.

"P.S.—Benedetti can therefore, apart from a few slight alterations, accept in principle."

The Emperor, as you see, alters our wording. Preserving silence in regard to Belgium, which, besides, we had only mentioned in view of ulterior and eventual combinations, he fixes his attention on the acquisition of Luxemburg, which is to be obtained by the aid of an understanding with the

King of Holland and without having recourse to violent measures. But what displeased you was the Emperor meddling in the arrangements you meant to impose on the whole of Germany, so as to ensure exclusive hegemony to Prussia; that he dared stipulate that each State should be the custodian of its territorial fortresses, formerly entrusted to the care of the Confederation which you henceforth dissolved. From that moment you took the firm resolution to substitute your own personal authority to that of the Federal Assembly, to possess yourself, not only of the fortresses, but of the direction and free disposal of the active forces of all the German States without distinction.

What did the Emperor say further? "Benedetti can therefore, apart from a few slight alterations, accept in principle." Accept what? It could not be a proposal of which, with or without orders, I had taken the initiative at Berlin, as I had written it. One does not accept what one proposes. It was therefore a combination that was offered to us. Who could have done this? You, evidently. And what could have been the object of it, if it were not the arrangement you had always considered as the only way of forming between France and Prussia a durable and sufficiently powerful alliance to permit of them settling everything in Europe

together, without fear *of meeting with armed resistance on the part of either England or Russia?*

How was it that these conferences had no continuation and were abandoned? The observations the Emperor had placed on the margin of the draft convention tended to limit our immediate aggrandisements to the acquisition of Luxemburg and the re-establishment of our frontier of 1814, combined, in a fair measure, with the maintenance of the sovereignty of the Southern German States, stipulated at Nikolsburg on our representations, which were to remain in exclusive possession of their respective strongholds. But you desired to have your hands free in Germany to crown your work, and you rebelled at the idea of France having authority to exercise any control there. Obedient to this feeling you had already despatched General von Manteuffel on a mission to St. Petersburg, and he assured you that you could certainly rely on the best intentions of the Emperor Alexander. Events have shown that was so. By the aid of what concessions did you succeed in binding Russia to your policy? That is your own secret, and I have not the childish pretension to seek to penetrate it. I may, however, be permitted to recall the fact that when in the month of October, 1870, the Cabinet of St. Petersburg denounced

the convention limiting the Russian forces in the Black Sea without any previous understanding with the other Powers who signed this international act, the favourable view you took of the proceeding ensured its success. Prussia had notwithstanding subscribed to all the stipulations of the Paris Congress, and it was her duty to uphold them and see they were respected. The opinion prevailed then that you had entered into an engagement at St. Petersburg to disavow the one which your Government had contracted in 1856. Whatever may be thought of this conjecture, you will certainly not contest the fact that from the moment you were able to rely in all contingencies on the goodwill of Russia, you put an end to our interviews by slipping away, thoroughly convinced that you need no longer show any regard for the French Government, and that you could without detriment forget all the engagements made with it.

I do not ask you to admit this, but I conjure you, in the interest of your own renown, to acknowledge that you were the originator of the combination concerning Belgium. Your glory cannot suffer from doing so. You had conceived vast designs; you could not, on the one hand, follow them up and realise them without having aid Austria low and expelled her from Germany, on the other without having come to terms with

France. Being unable to obtain the King's consent to sacrifices that were repugnant to his pride, the idea occurred to you of disinteresting us *everywhere where French was spoken*, and you applied yourself to that end with all the strength of your intellect so long as the co-operation or the neutrality of France appeared to you to be a condition essential to your success. When that moment was over, you changed your mind.

You were no longer compelled to abide by your proposals, and you repudiated them. The history of diplomacy offers examples that absolve you. Victory, moreover, by crowning your efforts, has so exalted you as to place you beyond censure.

You will permit me, however, Prince Bismarck, to point out to you that your policy has engendered militarism; that it has placed Europe in the necessity of arming, of arming unceasingly and beyond all measure, that nations live in terror of immense, of frightful catastrophes which some fortuitous event may suddenly cause to explode notwithstanding the prudence of the various Governments. To maintain this sad state of things the people stagger beneath the burden of taxation which is out of all proportion with the economic resources of each country. This situation has favoured the development of socialistic doctrines,

and you know whether they constitute a grave peril for social order. You are the generator of this double evolution ; posterity will hold you responsible and call you to account for it. Cease then in your retirement to excite human passions, to irritate feelings of self-esteem. Apply yourself, on the contrary, to attenuating your errors, either by confessing them, or by appealing to the necessities that compelled you to have recourse to them.

By abstaining to do so you will not free yourself from the responsibility you have incurred in the eyes of public morality. However modest, however feeble my own personal efforts may be, I feel confident they will not pass unperceived. Others will come, persons more competent, supplied with fresh documents, who will make truth evident. New voices will issue from silence to acclaim it. Future historians of our times will have that task to perform, and it will not be a difficult one for them to accomplish. If you then be still of this world, you will regret having failed to provide for this contingency yourself in the nightfall of your existence. If it be too late, you will turn in your grave at a contradiction that would have wounded your feelings. Speak, speak then, whilst it is still time!

" Prince Bismarck," you have said, if Herr Maximilian Harden is to be credited, " cannot disappear as a lamp that flares up and goes

out. He must go down like a planet." To do this, he must, first of all, pay homage to truth.[1]

CTE. BENEDETTI.

[1] At the end of the following essays is an account of the mission I performed at Ems. The reader, if I am not mistaken, will find therein, new elements which will enable him to form a better judgment on the events to which the essays refer, events that have been so diversely viewed, especially in Germany, up to recent times, and particularly on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the war of 1870.

# STUDIES IN DIPLOMACY

# STUDIES IN DIPLOMACY.

## THE EMPEROR WILLIAM I. AND PRINCE BISMARCK.[1]

THE retirement of Prince Bismarck will have marked a date in present times that history will retain. After the death of the Emperor William, the Chancellor of the Empire still looked like the continuer and most solid pillar of the policy he had so gloriously served. On relinquishing power, he seemed to have himself closed the long period during which he had exercised it. The scene remains the same. The actors change. The moment strikes us as favourable to cast a glance over this past, recent though it be. Let us hasten to say that he who would now undertake to give an account of such an undertaking

[1] These papers also deal in a general way with the circumstances which led to the Franco-German War and the situation it created in Europe. They were written successively at long intervals, with the result that they contain repetitions which I should have liked to have avoided in placing them together in a volume. But these mutilations would have rendered the statement of facts less clear and intelligible. The reader will therefore kindly bear this explanation in mind when meeting with similar remarks on different pages.

and express an opinion on it, would assuredly be rash. That task belongs to writers of the future generation. Those who have attempted it in our days must have done so under the influence of feelings that all who are contemporary with their subject endeavour in vain to avoid. And so we have no intention of touching upon events. But it seems to us that it will not be out of place, just now, to take one of their particular features, in regard to which we believe opinion has been absolutely misled, in order to put it to the test of facts.

It is generally thought that Prince Bismarck was the originator of the policy to which Prussia owes all her success, and that he had to force it on his Sovereign, which, it is added, he only did with difficulty. Is this judgment a correct one, is it just? Is Prince Bismarck the real, sole founder of the new German Empire? was King William merely the beneficiary? That is what we desire to elucidate, simply in the interest of historical truth.

Before approaching this task, it will be advantageous to show the character and aptitudes of Sovereign and Minister; to recall the position of the kingdom at the accession of King William and the idea he had formed of it; to ascertain, on the other hand, what Prince Bismarck thought on the same subject, and what was his judgment.

The predecessor of the future Emperor, Frederick William IV., possessed none of the qualities of his race. Mystical, irresolute, and yet authoritative, he constantly deviated from the line traced out by his ancestors. He was never the same man two days together, and his ministers exhausted their efforts in rectifying or rather concealing his inconsistencies. If fortune smiled on him, he avoided it. But in face of a complication he had the pluck to brave it out. Two events of equal importance suffice to determine the character of the prince and the aspect of the reign. He declined the Imperial crown offered him by the Frankfort Parliament, and he bore the humiliation Austria inflicted on him, at Olmütz, by the hand of Prince Schwarzenberg. He could not make up his mind to side either with Russia or the Western Powers during the Crimean War, as he would not or dared not support or combat the policy of the Vienna Cabinet, which had associated itself, in a certain measure, with France and England. Democracy and the Holy Alliance inspired him with equal distrust and plunged him into the same state of irresolution. He was nevertheless jealous of his authority, and carefully avoided allowing his brother, the Prince Royal, to have any share in the Government. The latter was able to meditate for many years on the errors he silently and

powerlessly witnessed. It was assuredly during this long period that he conceived and cherished the ambitious schemes that were to illustrate his reign.

This Prince had faith. He ascended the throne with the deep, resolute feeling that he was destined to accomplish great things: he gave a clear indication of this at Kœnigsberg, on the day of his coronation. He thought he held his sovereign rights from God, and owed no account of them but to Him and his own ancestors. At the time when his brother granted the first constitutional reforms, in 1847, he made reservations in his quality of heir to the throne: according to his ideas the elective assemblies should never know anything of the budget or foreign policy. It was with these convictions that, from the commencement of his reign, he decided on his programme, finding inspiration for that purpose in the traditional policy of his house, so strangely disregarded by his predecessor. The difficulties he had to overcome required extreme caution; they indicated a necessity for reserve: he therefore was and remained taciturn. He hid his thoughts beneath studied and never-failing courtesy. By his gentle and affable good grace, he exercised an ever powerful charm on the other sovereigns of Europe. It was thus that he won over the Emperor Alexander, his nephew; we know what con-

cessions, so unfortunate for the most precious interests of Russia herself, he obtained from him in 1866 and in 1870. He came to Paris, at the time of the Exhibition of 1867, shortly after the Luxemburg affair, preceded by a natural feeling of resentment of which he might have had cause to fear an open expression. He went away leaving impressions behind him that bore testimony to his skill, to the marvellous art which he so well knew how to employ to disarm the most prejudiced minds. The charmer did not inherit this precious virtue from his ancestors, who had been distinguished rather by the coarseness of their manners. But he had taken from them all the gifts and all the aptitudes that have so prodigiously assisted the Hohenzollerns in attaining greatness: firmness in their designs, opportuneness in forming resolutions, unlimited prudence, distrustfulness always on the alert, and when necessary dissimulation. "If it be a matter of duping, let us be knaves," wrote Frederick the Great. King William, having signed the treaty with Italy, forgot its existence; and he authorised the dowager Queen, sister of the mother of the Emperor of Austria, to convey to Vienna the assurance that his engagements had not the character attributed to them.

Fearing neither trouble nor work, he displayed incessant and untiring activity. No department

of the public service escaped his supervision. Bearing in mind that good polity necessitates good finances, his anxiety for the prudent administration of the resources of the State never on any occasion relapsed. Not one single outlay of an extravagant nature was incurred during his reign. But his first thought was for the army. He knew that diplomacy was fatally powerless, however able its agents might be, if it were not supported by a soundly organised military force, ever ready to second it. He brought into play all the resources of his mind to ensure the development of such a force and maintain it on a proper footing. His foresight served him well, for there is no disguising the fact, that all Prince Bismarck's skill would have led Prussia to ruin without the victories of Sadowa and Sedan.

During the long time he remained Prince Royal, he had as commander of a Rhenish Army Corps, made Coblenz his chief residence. He lived there surrounded by a few devoted friends, men of enlightened intellect, who deplored the failings of his brother as he did, and meditated with him on the destiny of Prussia, so seriously exposed by a sovereign and advisers who were both opposed to the sound and brilliant traditions of his family.

On his accession, he dismissed every one. He formed a Ministry composed of those same men

who had participated, more or less assiduously, in the confabulations of the little court at Coblenz; men of liberal aspirations whose advent to power could not fail to be welcomed by the majority in the Chamber of Deputies at Berlin, who were imbued with the same principles, or rather the same velleity. It was, as it was qualified at its origin, the Cabinet of the *New Era*. But the King, Prince by Divine Right, issue of a family that had formed the kingdom by conquest and without restraint, meant to retain the supreme, if not the exclusive direction of State affairs in his own hands.[1] Feeling that, to raise Prussia from the abasement into which it had fallen during the previous reign, he must, first of all, increase the military strength of the country, he announced at the opening of Parliament, that his first duty commanded him to re-model the army, and the new Cabinet introduced a bill according the Government considerable additional supplies. This

[1] "If we have been allowed," William II. recently said at Bremen, "to do what has been done, it is, above all, because there is *a tradition* in our house in virtue of which we consider ourselves *appointed by God* to preserve and direct the people over whom we reign for their good, and to protect our moral and material interests. It was by following this tradition that my grandfather accomplished the great deeds he did and succeeded in establishing the unity of the Empire. . . ." The young Emperor correctly expressed the ruling thought of his race, and he shows himself no less disposed than his grandsire to allow obstacles to be placed in the way of it, or his personal action to be interfered with. Prince Bismarck, as a case in point, has just had the experience of this.

proposal caused a first disagreement to break out between the Sovereign and the representatives of the country. The principles and ideas sown in Germany by France had germinated. They had exploded in 1848; they had met with adherents everywhere, especially in Prussia; the Chamber of Deputies at Berlin did not conceal its intention to insist on the chief of the State granting a reform in the Constitution and giving guarantees that it should participate more directly and efficaciously in the government of the kingdom. The King's advisers, inclining themselves towards parliamentary doctrines, considered that the moment had come to associate the Chamber more intimately with sovereign authority. These views shocked the King's dynastic feelings, the idea he had formed of the power and rights inherent in the crown; they threatened the work he wished to prepare and the success of which could only be ensured, he thought, by unity in its direction and by clever and particularly cautious guidance. He soon came to a decision. This sovereign, reputed devoid of initiative and firmness, dismissed his first Ministry, which was nevertheless formed of tried statesmen who were devoted to him.

Among the most frequent defenders of the throne and altar, amongst those who had battled so valiantly during the storm of 1848, a country

squire, Herr von Bismarck,[1] had shown himself the firmest and most vehement. His audacious language and the absoluteness of his doctrines had won his name a renown that placed him in the first rank. All has been said that could be said regarding his entrance into public life. His correspondence, including his most intimate letters written at that time, has been published with his consent; one would be tempted to think that he did not wish posterity to be left in ignorance of any of the political errors of his youth. It is therefore superfluous for us to pause at that. Let us note, however, that his feudal fervour won him the goodwill of King Frederick William, who appointed him Prussian delegate to the Frankfort Diet. This was the turning point in his career. A mind like his, enlightened by ardent patriotism, could not waste time in the wrangling of parties and castes. He understood, from the first day at the Federal Assembly, that he was on his right ground; that he was in presence of Prussia's most redoubtable adversaries; that there was the obstacle to her aggrandisement, to the influence her German quintessence gave her the right to claim in Germany. The attitude of the Austrian repre-

[1] Otto von Bismarck Schoenhausen, created Count Bismarck 16th September, 1865, and Prince on the 21st March, 1871.—*Translator's Note.*

sentative, the privilege he enjoyed of presiding over the Diet to the exclusion of all the other delegates, even him of the Prussian Government, the tendencies of the representatives of second-rate Courts, who had nothing to fear from Vienna and everything to apprehend from Berlin, revealed to him that the pact of 1815 condemned the Government of his country to impotence, and he felt convinced that this pact must be rent asunder if Prussia wished to resume her interrupted ascent. From that moment he regarded the doctrines he had so violently opposed with less repugnance. He had bitterly blamed what he termed the heresies of the Court at Coblenz; he now showed himself disposed to accept them in a certain measure. He slipped among the little congregation without having been invited. As deputy at the Berlin Chamber he had defended the alliance with Austria before and after Olmütz; as the King's representative at Frankfort he opposed it with all the violence of his nature. He had no hope of influencing Frederick William and his advisers, whom it would have been impossible to persuade to modify their views; but he had the presentiment that a new reign would shortly permit of a new policy being introduced. He looked upon the Diet as a hot-bed of dissimulation; he caused profound uneasiness in it by his outbursts of

frankness. He pronounced aloud, and in no measured terms, what his colleagues thought and did in the dark. This Assembly was in reality a gathering of adversaries in disguise. Austria and Prussia were like two china dogs. To the secondary States this threatening attitude was a precious guarantee of independence and security; they supported first one, then the other, of the two great Powers in accordance with their private interests, paralysing alternately the action of the Vienna Cabinet and the Berlin Cabinet when either displayed a tendency to become dangerously preponderant. Count Bismarck tore away the masks. With an inexhaustible flow of spirits he turned into ridicule the complicated, tumble-down organism of the Confederation, elaborated with foreign aid to render Germany powerless, and all for want of one sole, manly management. With the same unreserve and equal daring, after having pointed out the complaint, he prescribed the remedy. "The Austrian Empire," he said, in his private conversations, "is not a German State it is cosmopolitan; without the archduchy it would be a stranger in Germany, it has no right to a seat in the Diet; it should retire," he added in intimacy. "Every Prussian is a German," he said again, forgetting the Poles; "Prussia is the real Great German Power." This singular talk, so undiplomatic, so rarely heard

at the seat of the Diet, disturbed the tranquillity of no one because it was so strange. No one suspected Count Bismarck of being a prophet.

What he said at Frankfort, he wrote to Berlin, arranging his remarks to suit the King's temperament and that of his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Herr Von Manteuffel. This attitude, rash though it were, did not cause displeasure. The bold language of the representative of the monarchy flattered the monarch's pride. The sovereign knew his emissary: he had seen him at Berlin displaying a warmth sometimes unruly, but always devoted to his service, to the interests of the dynasty. He had, however, hesitated in delegating him to the Confederation. "Let his Majesty make the trial," Count Bismarck had said to him; "and if it does not do, he will recall me." The trial was to his advantage; he was maintained at his post in spite of his errors, in spite of the representations of the Courts of the Confederation and the efforts of the Prussian nobility, who solicited his recall, as he writes himself to his sister, Frau von Arnim.[1] Appointed to Frankfort in 1851, he was still there as Prussian representative in 1857, when the King's health compelled him to retire in favour of the Prince Royal, who became Regent. The new reign was imminent. Count Bismarck did not lose a moment in taking

[1] Letter of November 12th, 1858.

up his position. He published a pamphlet in which, ceasing to conceal his conversion, he publicly paid homage to the patriotic efforts of the National Parliament of 1848. One read therein notably as follows: "Prussia should no longer remain with Austria in the German Confederation, such as the Federal Act of 1815 and the final act of 1820 have made it; she should never have tolerated its reconstruction in 1850, and her interest is to urge dissolution."

The new Government had been hardly formed when Count Bismarck, in November, 1858, was despatched to St. Petersburg as Ambassador. What was the Prince Regent's idea on this occasion? Did he remove him from Frankfort under the impression that his presence there might endanger Prussia's relations with Austria, and with no other thought? He certainly did not consider it expedient to alarm the Vienna Cabinet; he wished on the contrary to give a pledge of his desire to act in all loyalty as a member of the Confederation; he wanted the displacement of the disturber of the sittings of the Federal Assembly to be understood in that sense by the Austrian Government. But he had other views in accrediting him to a family Court, to the Emperor Alexander, whose kindly feelings it was necessary to captivate. He thus gave him a mark of his confidence, foreseeing, no doubt,

that he would need before long, and in a more direct way, to have recourse to his services. Every one at Berlin felt this, from the particular kindness the Emperor showed him. If Count Bismarck had not received the assurance, he had the presentiment of what was to happen, as his correspondence shows.

Be that as it may, his mission to Russia was to him an exile. He took his opinions along with him, disavowing none of them. The remembrance of Austria's attitude during the Crimean War encouraged feelings of resentment in Russia that have not entirely died out even at the present day: Count Bismarck met with sympathizers who were disposed to listen to him. Prince Gortchakoff, who had become Chancellor of the Empire, after having represented his sovereign at the Diet, shared all his hostile views: he had encouraged them at Frankfort, he did not oppose them at St. Petersburg. The Prince Regent's ambassador, on his side, exerted himself to animate and above all to irritate those feelings, from which he was to reap such precious advantages later on. He did not, however, want them to forget him at Berlin, and he devoted his spare moments to converting his new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Baron Schleinitz; to proving to him that the policy of Prussia should have but one aim, the transformation of Germany

to her advantage. It was thus that, on May 12th, 1859, on the eve of the Italian campaign, fearing a reconciliation with Austria, he entreated him to take advantage of this propitious opportunity to break off all connection with her and boldly repudiate a solidarity disastrous to the interests of the King and country. The letters he wrote from St. Petersburg are known, like those which he sent to his family from Frankfort; they have been printed on several occasions. We will only cull from them one thought which resumes them all: "I see in our federal situation," he says, "a flaw from which Prussia suffers, and which must, sooner or later, be extirpated *ferro et igne*." "In a word, all this," he writes again, in that flowery language peculiar to him, this diplomatist doubled occasionally with a poet, "is but a question of time; nations and individuals, folly and wisdom, peace and war, all come and go, like a wave, and the sea remains . . ." It was at that moment that this ardent champion of absolutism revealed himself as an apologist of the Frankfort parliament, of universal suffrage, of all the principles which he had, until then, so disdainfully outraged. The future will show whether he was wisely advised by his genius on every point: universal suffrage has already contributed, not a little, towards hurling him from that lofty position whence, in the enjoyment of his

immense power, he considered himself inexpugnable. But, however this may be, we can already examine Prince Bismarck's long career from the day he left Berlin to represent King Frederick William at Frankfort.

The letters he wrote to Baron Schleinitz were certainly placed before King William who had succeeded his brother. They were penned with that idea, and to flatter the master whose thoughts the future Minister had penetrated. And so the new Sovereign, far from taking offence, recalled him from St. Petersburg to despatch him to Paris: after having placed him in a position to approach the Emperor Alexander, he accredited him to the Emperor Napoleon. He thus prepared him for the task he was to perform and which it became urgent to entrust to him. At this moment, indeed, the conflict between the Government and the Chamber of Deputies had become more pronounced. The majority had refused the supplies for the reorganisation of the army and the Cabinet was divided as to the best course to follow; some of its members were disposed to advise that certain concessions should be granted. The King felt convinced that he was placed in the alternative of renouncing his plans or of placing power in firmer hands, in those of a statesman resolved to second his policy in face of all the difficulties which would spring up

from the commencement and which it would be necessary to overcome at any cost. He resolved, as we have said, to accept the resignation of the Ministry of the *New Era*, or rather he brought it about. To whom was the duty of forming the new Cabinet entrusted? To Count Bismarck. Still the King knew his opinions thoroughly, the policy he had not ceased to advise, his hostility to Austria, to the Diet, his ardent desire to break up the federal pact and to embark on a diplomatic campaign, a military one if necessary, to place Prussian power in Germany on a new footing. What conclusion must one draw? That the Sovereign's views were evidently those that the representative of Prussia at Frankfort, St. Petersburg, and Paris had not ceased to suggest and uphold.

The characters, however, of Sovereign and Minister bore no resemblance to each other. Count Bismarck, with his stubborn mind, must have displayed both his qualities and defects in the performance of his new duties: resolution, rashness, want of due restraint. His energetic and passionate nature made him refractory to the laws of prudence. Diplomatic and professional secrecy appeared to him no longer efficacious in this age of universal publicity. Disguise seemed neither useful nor profitable. Acting as at Frankfort, he dissembled neither his plans nor hopes. He un-

bosomed himself to the Austrian representative in person, Count Karolyi, at one of their first interviews. Was this skill or weakness? Was he acting in accordance with wise calculation or involuntary impulse? People had become familiar with the diplomatist's liberty of speech, they were bewildered at the Minister's effusiveness. There was the King's will, however, always on the alert, always imperious, which had to be taken into account, and which had asserted itself on many occasions. We shall see the Sovereign authorising things to be done, giving assurances in contradiction to the declarations and confidences of Prince Bismarck. We shall see these masters, both equally well advised, often contradicting one another, but always faithful to the thought that was common to both of them. It was at once a peculiar and exceedingly interesting sight to watch these two gladiators both pursuing the same end by very different roads.

What was the share of each of them in the glorious result that has crowned their mutual efforts? The legend exists: Prince Bismarck directed Prussia's policy alone, with his iron hand; he caused all its evolutions. Thanks to his vehement firmness, he vanquished at Berlin as well as at Vienna and Paris; he dispelled the King's weakness and triumphed over his hesita-

tion. Future historians will have much to do to alter this judgment. It is nevertheless erroneous. It would assuredly be childish to deny or even to contest, in any measure, Prince Bismarck's political genius. He gave many striking proofs of it previous to the two wars that produced the German Empire; he has given more marvellous examples of it still, since the re-establishment of peace. Whilst the Army General Staff was busy with the consolidation and development of the military strength of the new Empire, he devoted all the resources of his intellect to guarantee the work accomplished against every contingency. He has concluded alliances that no one else would have foreseen or attempted. He has riveted to the fortunes of his country the two Powers whom recent events would have seemed to have destined to other arrangements. Austria, resigned, has driven the remembrance of her defeats and her resentment from her mind; forgetful Italy has ruptured all the bonds binding her to France; both have accepted the yoke of Germany and are at her mercy. After having secured the neutrality of the Emperor Napoleon in 1866, the friendly abstention of the Emperor Alexander in 1870, Prince Bismarck, with the aid of England, was able, at the Berlin Congress, to tear to shreds the treaty of San Stefano and vanquish Russia without having recourse to arms,

by snatching from her the concessions she had wrung from Turkey, after a sanguinary but glorious war. He did more; by means of a subterfuge he placed Austria in possession of two provinces of the Ottoman Empire, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and gave a proper tone to the policy of the Austro-Hungarian Cabinet on the Bosphorus. He has thus succeeded not only in sheltering the past, the advantages already acquired, so far as human foresight can do, but also in preparing for his successors the task of the future, the crowning of the work he has so potently contributed towards building-up. At the same time he has rendered the hostility, which was already so profound in the Balkan Peninsula between Russia and Austria, less curable and perhaps more bitter. By what means has he won over Italy, persuaded her to renounce her national and patriotic traditions, and follow him along a path where, hitherto at least, she has encountered naught but disappointments and painful trials? We will not attempt to penetrate this mystery. What we wished to establish was that Prince Bismarck's foresight and skill have secured Germany a treaty which places at her disposal the united forces of Austria and Italy, under relative conditions that guarantee neither of these Powers absolute reciprocity. What we also desired to establish was, that Austria has accepted or sub-

mitted to a situation that will be a lasting obstacle to any reconciliation with Russia; that Italy will not for long be able to renew entirely cordial relations with France. And this is in some measure Prince Bismarck's personal work. In peace as in war, he has thus marked his place in history at an altitude unattainable by his contemporaries. Germany rightly pays him the same homage as France has been doing to Richelieu for nearly three centuries. But it would be an injustice if, in giving the Minister his due, the King were refused what belongs to him. It would be iniquitous if, obedient to a popular idea, one were to couple William I. with Louis XIII., who, indeed, was an eminent prince in the measure and with the aptitude of his character. The future German Emperor, like the son of Henri IV., possessed, but in a higher degree, a merit that is always precious in a ruler, that of giving his confidence to none but men worthy of it. The Generals von Moltke and von Roon, previous to his time, were distinguished officers, but were in the ranks, if we may so express it: the King, understanding the immense value of their respective qualities, of his own personal initiative and previous to having summoned Count Bismarck, placed one at the head of the Great General Staff and made the other Minister of War. We are all familiar with the glorious services they have

rendered. These selections show more positively than we could do, with what marvellous penetration the Sovereign was gifted.

We have seen when and under the empire with what anxiety the King entrusted Count Bismarck with the presidency of the Council. We have expressed the opinion that this step should be attributed to the existence of absolute concordance in the views of King and Minister, and to their perfect understanding as to the best way to ensure the triumph of them. The King, in fact, did not abdicate into the hands of his new adviser, as is generally thought, and it would be out of all reason to claim exclusively for Count Bismarck the glory of the success that has been attained. Diplomatists who followed the events of this period on the spot are aware that the King never ceased, at any moment, to direct the acts of his Government. Never was a resolution taken, never was a diplomatic communication made, without his order and without his supervision. Important despatches were never sent away without being submitted to him, and it often happened that they only left after he had amended them. Count Bismarck, one may say, was the originator of hardy resolutions, the King was always the modifier of them. One trusted in his daring, the other sought counsel in prudence. These differences of opinion continued until the war of 1866,

and during that long period Europe heard naught but the voice of Count Bismarck. The break, which the King put on, when needful, profoundly irritated the Minister, and his anger found relief in violent explosions. He expounded his schemes, and explained the reasons that commanded prompt and rapid action, without troubling to confine himself to the limits of an intimate circle; he displayed entire confidence in a success that Europe would submit to as soon as it had been achieved. He did not spare his master, reproaching him with timidness, which was in reality but wise and skilful cautiousness, and distinctly a matter of policy. The King, in fact, lent himself to all the stratagems destined to make war with Austria inevitable; but he wished hostilities to break out at the right time and when he would be able to cast the responsibility, if not the initiative of them, on the Court of Vienna, when he would no longer have to fear the ill-will of the Powers and the expression of public opinion. Consequently he took care to keep in the background, to detach his personality from all the complications of which his Minister willingly assumed the responsibility. He preserved impenetrable silence. When he broke it, in his rare interviews with the diplomatists accredited to his Court, he repudiated, with his gentle affability, all warlike thought, any intention of troubling European peace.

Thus, whilst the Sovereign affected to have horror of a rupture, making nevertheless no concession to avert it, authorising, on the contrary, his Minister to multiply his efforts to bring it on, Count Bismarck concealed from no one that he wished to engage in the armed struggle without any other thought than that of fighting and conquering, without troubling about the attitude of the Powers or public opinion. The rumour thus gained credit that the King was peacefully disposed, whilst the Minister, only, was warlike. This belief, propagated by the press, which gathered all its information from Count Bismarck, and none from the King, was spread all over Europe, and when the events occurred the hand of the Minister, only, was seen in connection with them; the Sovereign, clothed in his apparent moderation, appeared to have acted merely an involuntary part. We ought to add that William I. never once showed himself jealous at the renown clinging to the President of the Council. It suited his nature and was part of his calculations to leave the initiative and responsibility of violent resolutions to his Minister; he could thus disapprove if circumstances required it; he was contented at having the certitude that the advantages derived from what occurred belonged to his reign and dynasty. But let us examine the facts and see what they teach.

We have said that the King whilst as yet exercising the power of Prince Regent, on opening the parliamentary session on January 12th, 1859, had announced it to be his firm will, that the army should be reorganised, or rather its strength increased. In the same speech, he expressed his sympathy for the German population in the duchies of the Elbe, and his words were greeted with the applause of the whole Assembly. From that moment he conveyed an idea of the principle and tendency of the policy that distinguished his reign. Therefore, when Count Bismarck came to power in 1862, he had neither to submit a line of conduct, nor new views, to his Sovereign's approbation. The master's thoughts were exactly the same as those which haunted the mind of the minister. An understanding already existed between them, both in regard to the object to be attained, and the means to be employed to reach it. The King could have no doubt on that point, and the conviction he had formed influenced him in his choice of the new President of the Council. Are we to suppose then, that at that period they had, in their mutual ambition, perceived the final limit of the horizon which was opening radiant before them? There is nothing to authorise such a presumption. To men whom fate has singled out for mighty destinies, one willingly attributes, when great

deeds are accomplished, a boundless prescience, and schemes that embrace, with absolute certainty, the future of nations during a long period. This is attributing too much to human genius. Prince Bismarck himself has never claimed such glory. No statesman has ever taken such little care to conceal his inner mind; and when one studies his correspondence, when one evokes the confidences of which he was so prodigal during the early years of his long ministry, one is easily convinced that his prevision, like his hopes, extended neither so far, nor so high as has been imagined. In diplomacy as in warfare, as in all things in this world, the errors of your adversaries are more profitable to you than the best strategy. They are what is commonly called good luck. Prussia has been overwhelmed by the caprice of fortune. Let us be just, however, and hasten to say that it was to a prince and advisers worthy of all his favour, that the interests of Prussia were confided during the period anent which we are rapidly jotting down a few details history will retain. Morality, in truth, has not always been respected; but in the conflicts of nations, morality and politics rarely go hand in hand.

Two questions occupied more particularly the attention of the diplomatic world at the time when Count Bismarck, in response to his sovereign's call, formed his first Ministry. Poland had taken

up arms again, and claimed the autonomy which had been guaranteed to her by the treaties of 1815; she had engaged in a supreme and sanguinary struggle which provoked the diplomatic intervention of the Powers. On the other hand the German States, yielding to the pressure of public feeling, had resumed, through the intermediary of the Diet, the iniquitous quarrel thrust on Denmark in regard to Schleswig-Holstein, and threatened her with another execution. At the commencement of the outbreak in Poland, King William had entreated his nephew, the Emperor Alexander, not to make any concessions to his revolted subjects, to neglect nothing, on the contrary, to repress the rebellion, declaring himself, in his quality of co-divider, jointly responsible with Russia in the present as his predecessors had been in the past. Count Bismarck, sharing the views and feelings of his sovereign, was no sooner in power, than he offered the St. Petersburg Cabinet Prussia's armed co-operation. This was his commencement, his first diplomatic step. Russia declined the offer; it would have wounded her dignity had it been supposed that she needed the assistance of a neighbouring State to struggle victoriously with the Polish insurrection. Count Bismarck, however, insisted and succeeded in persuading Russia to consent to a convention, or what is termed a cartel to lessen its importance, in

virtue of which Prussia was to hand over any insurgents, who might seek refuge on her territory, to the Russian authorities. The aim of the President of the Council at Berlin was to place Russia under an obligation, foreseeing that he would soon have to ask her for the value of his services in the matter of the duchies. It was, indeed, in the duchies of the Elbe that the new monarch proposed to strike his first blow, as he had foreshadowed in his maiden speech to the Chamber of Deputies. We know how fearlessly Count Bismarck seized upon this question. He rapidly succeeded in solving it by war. Austria, aware of Prussia's real intentions, was obliged, in order to oppose them, to take part in the aggression directed against the Danish possessions. In spite of the treaty signed at London in 1852, guaranteeing Denmark the integrity of her frontiers, and thanks to the abstention, if not to the connivance of Russia, Holstein and Schleswig were successively invaded and occupied. The other Powers were alarmed, and made repeated representations at Berlin. Writers deserving of consideration[1] aroused the attention of the press and public opinion, by denouncing the Prussian Government as the sole disturber of European peace. In

[1] See particularly two volumes by M. Deschamps, Belgian Minister of State and formerly Minister of Foreign Affairs Brussels, 1865.

presence of these manifestations, and contrary to the advice of his Prime Minister, the King considered he would be exposing Prussia to perilous isolation by giving any further indication of his ambitious views. Count Bismarck had to resign himself to negotiating, in concert with the Austrian Cabinet, and they signed at Vienna the convention of October 30th, 1864, by which Denmark ceded the duchies to Prussia and Austria, who jointly became the legitimate possessors of them. Community of possession, a fruitful source of conflicts easy to produce, suited Count Bismarck, who had suggested the idea. The danger was soon perceived at Vienna, and further negotiations resulted in the conclusion of the treaty of Gastein on August 4th, 1865. This act did not seriously modify the respective positions of the two Powers ; it merely stipulated that Austria should occupy Holstein exclusively, and Prussia Schleswig. The sovereignty remained undivided. King William and Count Bismarck held the Viennese Court at their mercy. It only remained for them to be patient, or rather to cause circumstances more suitable to the accomplishment of their designs to occur at the right time.

With these intentions, and so as to be ready at the supreme moment, the King pushed on the reorganisation of the army, without paying any attention to the protestations, noisy and persistent

though they were, that arose in the Chamber of Deputies. Count Bismarck seconded him with all his energy; he did not hesitate to make himself the firm champion of the prerogatives claimed by the sovereign. Assailed by the entire Assembly, he resisted the onslaught, often provoking it, without ever giving way. They had recourse to dissolution, and the country, several times consulted, maintained its confidence in its representatives. This conflict lasted for nearly four years, until the war of 1866. During that long period no budget ever obtained the sanction of the Assembly. This peculiar situation in no way embarrassed the President of the Council; he became quite accustomed to it. Interpreting one of the clauses of the Constitution in his own way, notwithstanding the most lively protestations, he pointed out that as there was no budget, he was justified in conforming to the last financial vote recorded previous to his coming into office. He thus ensured, as was his duty, he said, the working of all the departments of the State in perfect accordance with the law. The receipts of each financial year exceeded the outlay; he devoted the surplus to the additional expenditure at the War Office in virtue of the sovereign's decrees. The King's will was respected, the object in view attained, and the Minister rose in the monarch's confidence.

But the Liberal party, having an immense majority in the Chamber, protested against the expedients resorted to by the Prime Minister. United to the Progressists, the National Liberals, Schwerin, Benningsen, Sybel, Virchow, Richter, all the leaders of those two great parties denounced the measure both in their speeches and in the press, as a permanent violation of the constitutional pact, and, whilst claiming the right of the Assembly to control the outlay of the revenue, contested the legality of any unauthorised expenditure. Vain efforts: Count Bismarck made no concession; the struggle continued, assuming every day a more bitter character. The arbitrary form of government that the Minister so obstinately maintained, wounded the feelings of the middle classes. It became evident, moreover, that the King and his adviser intended to settle the destinies of Prussia without the assistance of her representatives. The country became alarmed, and newspapers of every shade of liberal opinion kept up a violently impassioned agitation which, on the eve of war, led to an attempt on the Prime Minister's life.

Whilst men of enlightened intellect, politicians particularly, struggled for parliamentary institutions, supported by the unanimous feeling of the country, the aristocratic class, without concealing its anxiety, apprehended a conflict with Austria.

The union of the two great German Powers, founded by their victories over the *hereditary foe*, and dating back to 1815, was regarded in the ranks of the nobility as a most precious guarantee for the whole of Germany. It preserved her from all invasion, whether of new ideas and the revolution, or an attempt on the part of some ambitious neighbour coveting the banks of the Rhine. They were convinced that war with Austria would be the opening of an era of all kinds of peril.

Under the influence of these different convictions, a sort of involuntary alliance was established among people of all opinions, between all parties, at court as in the city, in the press as in the drawing-room, to avert the misfortunes they imagined they perceived threatening them. Count Bismarck was reviled everywhere, in society and at the palace as well as in parliament. People did not confine themselves to denouncing him as a public danger, to looking upon a struggle with Austria as a fratricidal war that would place all German countries at the foreigner's mercy, the King was besieged in the view of persuading him to part with a Minister who was leading the Kingdom to certain ruin. He was assailed with the most urgent suggestions on all sides; he found an echo of them in the bosom of his family. Most of the Princes, the

Queen herself, became the mouthpiece of the alarm that resounded everywhere: at Berlin, in the provinces, at all the German Courts.

A spirit less firm, an ambition less sound, would have yielded to the general uproar. The King remained unmoved. Neither internal danger, nor the peril far more serious to which it was imagined he was exposing the integrity of the kingdom, affected him. He paid no attention either to the terror displayed by the population, or to the incriminations that were the result, however lively or general they might be. He imposed silence around him;[1] he exerted himself to tranquillize some, to charm others, never acknowledging that his policy could or must lead to an armed struggle. Count Bismarck served him to his satisfaction with the vigour and ingenuity the task he had confided to him required, personally assuming the responsibility of all the complications. If, during this long and anxious struggle, destiny had forced King William to renounce his maturely premeditated schemes, he would have dismissed Count Bismarck and have issued from this difficult position with the renown of a sovereign wisely advised at the proper

[1] Notably on the Queen, who ostensibly avoided meeting Count Bismarck, and above all conversing with him, had to modify her demeanour and to refrain henceforth from expressing her private opinions.

moment. The Minister alone would have carried along with him into retirement the severe judgment of his contemporaries. But such a thought never entered the King's mind. Appreciating events with defiant perspicacity, he refused to listen to advice of any kind, no matter whence it came or the competency of the persons offering it, and firmly left the reins of his government in Count Bismarck's hands.

These facts are beyond discussion. They refute the legend. The obstinacy displayed by the King in repelling the importunity he was beset with, is not characteristic of a prince who would have obeyed a minister's impulsion with blind and unconscious submission. We have shown how the King understood the exercise of his rights, how he insisted on having the tacit, but always vigilant direction of everything. He did not cease doing so after the Empire was established. Count Bismarck bears testimony to this himself: "I have great respect for," he says, in that proud and haughty language which has given such powerful relief to his personality, "I am very much attached to the Emperor William, and I think I have given him proof of my devotedness more frequently than he has shown me his gratitude; but I must say that if I have expended my strength, my health, my life in his service, he does not spare me shocks and causes for irritation. My

health would be much better without the little letters with which his hand honours me." If it were thus when Count Bismarck had shown his precious aptitude, when success had responded to the mutual efforts of the King and himself in a measure beyond all prevision, when the Minister could justly claim a considerable share in the achievement and greater liberty of action, how can one hesitate to recognise that royal supervision must have been exercised much more rigorously, actively, and imperiously, during the period of preparation, when the destinies of the country were about to be left to the fate of arms and the caprice of fortune? The King was risking the glory, if not the existence, of his dynasty, Count Bismarck his reputation as a statesman and his own future. One stake was infinitely more precious than the other, and it is easy to understand that the Sovereign should have applied himself to watching over and often restraining the impetuous action of his Minister, with whose temperament he was familiar.

Thus the two wars, that of 1866 like that of 1870, both desired, both prepared a long time in advance by staff-officers and diplomacy, only actually broke out at the date fixed by the King. The generals told him from the commencement of 1866, that the reorganisation of the Prussian army was complete; that every measure had

been taken to ensure prompt mobilisation, whereas the Austrian forces were still in course of formation; and that a prompt resolution would ensure victory. Count Bismarck, on his side, seconded General von Moltke's solicitations with all possible warmth; and urged the King to authorise him to hasten the rupture. His Majesty would not be influenced by these preconcerted entreaties. He displayed as much firmness in his resistance, in his determination to await the favourable moment, as he had done when the friends of peace implored him to renounce a policy which they considered fatal to his house and country. He wished it to appear that war was forced on him by circumstances and was in no way due to his own initiative. Was this pusillanimity or wisdom? Was it a timid calculation or a happy inspiration? Events have shown him right in contradiction to all his advisers. Indeed, Austria's mistakes, particularly her determination to decline the Congress, which the Powers had suggested and to which Prussia, by the King's commands, had hastened to adhere, created a new situation. "In face of Austria's answer," Commander Nigra telegraphed from Paris to General La Marmora, "Prince Gortchakoff and Lord Clarendon have pronounced the Congress impossible. M. Drouyn de Lhuys has just done the same . . . He renders justice to the

spirit of conciliation and earnestness of the other Powers (Prussia and Italy) . . ." This was exactly what the King was waiting for—the precise moment to strike, the opportunity so much desired. War became inevitable by the action of the Vienna Cabinet, and it was permissible to saddle it with a good share of the wrongs the Berlin Government had at the origin, exclusively assumed. And so William I., on setting out to take command of his armies, was able to say to the Italian Minister: "They have long accused me of wishing for war to satisfy ambitious aims, but now, after Austria's refusal to attend the Congress, her unworthy violation of the treaty of Gastein . . . the whole world knows who is the aggressor."[1] Thus the Emperor Francis Joseph, so outrageously provoked, with a display of dissimulation and perseverance that nothing had discouraged, became the originator of the war. The King of Prussia had attained his end, that which he had been pursuing, personally, contrary to the liking and contrary to the reiterated advice of his generals and his Prime Minister. He threw his armies into Saxony and Bohemia, at a propitious and opportune moment, whilst declining the responsi-

[1] The King, on his return to Berlin, in his speech at the commencement of the parliamentary session, thought he could openly thank Providence, without departing from truth, "for the grace that had assisted Prussia in diverting a *hostile invasion* from her frontiers . . ."

bility of this redoubtable conflict. He was no longer the sole disturber of peace; he could, under such circumstances, face the disapprobation of other Courts and the discontent of public opinion.

We shall find him following this same line of conduct, with the same anxiety, the same calculations, during the period preceding the war of 1870. The conquest of the countries united to his kingdom in 1866 had not satisfied his ambition. The easy and brilliant achievements against Austria had, on the contrary, considerably sharpened it. The Confederation of Northern Germany, the outcome of the treaty of Prague, was already nothing more than a pledge of what was to follow; it must be completed by the addition of the Southern States, and the German Empire must be re-established to the advantage of the House of Hohenzollern. The obstacle to this was not on the Main, that artificial and manifestly temporary limit; it was at Paris. It did not take long to understand this, and to become convinced that another war must be undertaken to complete the the edifice. The King looked on this from the commencement as an inevitable contingency, and with greater resolution than Count Bismarck himself.[1] Different incidents that we could recall

[1] Notwithstanding the King's never-failing guardedness, he more than once, at the opening of parliamentary sessions, let fall allusions, addressed to *Germany*, *to the fraternal nations*, *to the land bounded by the Alps and Baltic*, which according to the semi-official news-

justify us in thinking so. Limiting ourselves, for the moment, to determining the part of two men in the preparation of the great things they accomplished, we will merely remind our readers here, that under the King's personal impulse, and before peace with Austria was definitely concluded, the reorganisation of the army was commenced and persevered in without pause; in future it was to comprise the effectives of the annexed countries and of those States recently confederated with Prussia. The number of army corps was increased from nine to twelve, and it was established by official documents that the Confederation of Northern Germany could place more than a million soldiers in the field. The King intended taking the supreme command of these forces and doing what he pleased with them.

It was necessary, however, to concert with the Confederate States, to stipulate the clauses of the new association with them. Resolutely unyielding, always rebellious to any intervention of the legislative power in the domain which he reserved exclusively to his sovereign authority, the King consented to no sacrifice in the elaboration of the federal pact. He would not grant Parliament any rights likely to limit his personal action, as he had understood and practised it

papers made *the hearts of all patriots leap in expectation of coming events.*

during his reign. Parliament, sprung from universal suffrage, became, on its side, exacting and refractory. The conflict between regal power and the Prussian Chamber of Deputies threatened to be renewed with the representatives of the Northern Confederation; Count Bismarck wished to prevent it. He advised a conciliative attitude; the little letters, with which the master's hand too frequently honoured him, were an obstacle to his views. These letters exasperated him; he nevertheless exerted all his skill to protect and impose the monarch's claims. The task was difficult and often painful. He succeeded, however, after long and laborious efforts, in satisfying the King without discontenting Parliament beyond measure, so that the Constitution was voted and objectionable discussions avoided. In the meanwhile his health was put to a severe test, and it was from that time that he often, as we know, pleaded his enervated condition, from which he has sometimes seriously suffered, to escape, by absenting himself, from the difficulties of his position and more particularly from the exactions of his Sovereign. It must be admitted that again, on this occasion, the will stated to be vacillating and submissive, far from showing restraint or a disposition to yield, was firmly asserted, and triumphed over all obstacles. Count Bismarck did not regret this himself, later on, in the dis-

cussions he had to engage in before Parliament: he made large use of the immense power that had devolved on him thanks to the King's invincible resistance.

We know what authority the federal pact conferred on the President of the Northern Confederation and his Chancellor. In regard to military matters, the King of Prussia was invested with absolute power; and so that no obstacle might be thrown in his way for a long time, it was required, by an innovation that seems strange in our age, that the arrangements connected with the war department, both respecting levies of men and expenditure, should be voted for several years. He could also declare war and make peace without having recourse to Parliament. In a political sense the Chancellor, who alone exercised executive power, was amenable to the President of the Confederation — now German Emperor — only; and, by an inversion of all the principles in like matter, he presided over the *Bundesrath*, the second Chamber of the federal association, which shared the legislative power with Parliament, and was an Assembly composed entirely of revocable functionaries delegated by the Confederate States. Thus whilst the Chancellor alone grasped the reins of the Federal Government, he participated at the same time, in legislation, not as a simple member of one of the

two Chambers, but as President of that which, by its organisation, was dependent on his all-powerful direction. These arrangements have been taken as a pattern by the German Empire.

The foregoing brief indications suffice to explain in what spirit the federal institutions were conceived and drafted, and in what aim they were imposed. The King remained the independent master of his own resolutions, and was more powerful and better armed for future contingencies. Not having conceded to the Parliament of the North any right to supervise or circumscribe his action, he had full liberty to make his preparations for the new war he had in contemplation. He gave this matter all his care, devoting his attention particularly to the army, whilst leaving the choice and arrangement of the expedients destined to provoke the conflict, to the skill and fertile imagination of his Minister. But he was thoroughly determined not to engage in hostilities prematurely, and there was again witnessed between the Sovereign on the one hand and the Generals[1] and Count Bismarck on the other, the same dissent as had marked the preparation of war with Austria.

[1] A work, attributed to a superior officer, which has just appeared at Cassel, and from which the *Berliner Tageblatt* has published long extracts, reveals all the efforts made by the military party to prevail on the King to go to war at this time. General Count Waldersee, according to the author, particularly exerted himself in that direction.

On this occasion again, they in vain called the King's attention to the military measures the Imperial Government was taking, and the activity displayed by Marshal Niel; they pointed out to him in vain that time was to the advantage of France and to the prejudice of Prussia, and that at this moment they could surprise the French army which was in course of reorganisation both in regard to its effective and its appliances. At the commencement of 1869, Count Bismarck put forward the candidature of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern to the Spanish crown. The King first of all considered this combination ill-timed; he refused his assent. He thought on the one hand, that his new troops and those of his German allies did not yet possess the necessary coherence and solidity. He had, on the other, a moral reason for not hurrying; it was always the same and was always present in his mind: he took into consideration, as matters of first importance, the feeling of the Great Powers and the state of public opinion in Europe. He desired, as in 1866, to await events, the faults or errors of his adversary, the propitious moment when he could repudiate all idea of aggression on his own part, and attribute the initiative of it to him. He knew that his own pacific declarations deceived neither the Governments nor the public mind, that since Sadowa he was the object of legitimate and general suspicion:

there was, in fact, no longer the least doubt for any one, that the aim of his ambition was the Imperial Crown, and he did not conceal from himself that he would only be able to grasp it after a new victory and the defeat of France. "The more I observe the line of conduct of the Prussian Government," wrote our Ambassador on January 5th, 1868, "the more I am persuaded that all its efforts tend to establish its power over the whole of Germany, and each day I receive fresh proof that it pursues this aim with the conviction that it will not be able to attain it without placing France in the impossiblity of putting an obstacle in its way. . . ." And after having examined the whole position he concludes thus: "It is consequently a formidable war that we shall have to carry on, in which a whole people will take part against us. The Emperor's Government cannot, therefore, weigh all the chances beforehand with too great care, or too maturely reflect, before coming to the decision they may consider best for the interests and salvation of the country."

The French Government, however, carefully avoided supplying the Berlin Cabinet with any subject for serious discontent. France had offered the belligerents the preliminaries of peace at Nikolsburg; she had inserted a provision in them stipulating that the population of Northern Schles-

wig should be consulted before being annexed to Prussia. After the conclusion of peace, Count Bismarck informed our Ambassador that he firmly intended to conform to this; but, questioned on the subject in 1867, he declared at the tribune of the Parliament, in terms that might have caused excitement at Paris, that the two Powers who signed the treaty of Prague were *alone* qualified *to watch over* its execution. The French Government did not accept this first challenge. On the contrary, it took advantage of every opportunity that occurred to establish loyal and sincere intercourse with the Berlin Cabinet. It proposed a good and disinterested understanding, in regard to both the Eastern and Italian questions with a view to solving them peacefully. It could suit neither the King nor Count Bismarck, who were bent on other solutions, to assist us in effecting a reconciliation between the Italian Government and the Pope, and help us to put an end to a state of things in the peninsula that impeded our freedom of action. Nor did it suit them any better to associate themselves with France in the discussions that were being renewed without end on the Bosphorus. If they had not entered into formal engagements, they had at all events encouraged hopes at St. Petersburg, and they were particularly careful to keep on the right side of Russia, in order to oppose her to Austria, at the

price it might be necessary to give, when the time came to fight on the Rhine. Influenced by this twofold anxiety, the Cabinet of Berlin accepted none of the suggestions made by that of Paris; it was courteous, but resolved not to form amicable and intimate relations with France; on the contrary, it exerted all its credit with other Powers to dissuade them from joining in the views of the Imperial Government; sometimes using influence with the Pontifical Court, sometimes with that of Florence, to prevent a reconciliation; finally, exchanging communications with Garibaldi himself, in order to provoke manifestations or encourage attempts destined to more completely divide Italy and France at the proper moment.[1] In January, 1870, the French Government made a last and supreme effort. Desiring to give striking proof of its pacific intentions, it raised the question of disarmament. So as not to expose itself to a direct refusal, which might have caused offence, it solicited the assistance of Great Britain. At its request, the English Cabinet consented to become the intermediary between France and Prussia; Lord Clarendon, the principal Secretary of State, instructed the English Ambassador at Berlin to ascertain the views of Count Bismarck.

[1] See *Ma Mission en Prusse*. See also the *Correspondance de Mazzini avec M. de Bismarck en* 1868 *et* 1869, published since the death of the Italian agitator, proposing to overthrow Victor Emmanuel if he formed an alliance with Napoleon III.

This measure was not attended by any good result. The Chancellor, after taking the King's commands, declared that Prussia could not acquiesce in such a proposal, he *considered it useless* to discuss the principle and the issues it might raise.

These various incidents placed the Berlin Cabinet in a delicate position. They brought the respective views of France and Prussia into evidence and opposition. It therefore became every day more urgent for the King and Count Bismarck to come to a decision. They knew, besides, that the armament in France was proceeding; she had made her new rifle, renewed her artillery, increased her effective; they thought her better equipped and more redoubtable than she was, unfortunately, in reality. They persuaded themselves that her strength would be greater before long; and they saw increasing peril in further adjournment of the conflict for which both were making ready. Preparations at Berlin had reached their height: they were in a position to face the struggle, and could not hope to be in a better one at any other moment. The Great General Staff called attention to the state of matters in its daily reports, which were supported by Count Bismarck; the King permitted in 1870 what he had forbidden in the preceding year: he authorised Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern to accept the Spanish crown.

Regardless of diplomatic decorum and of the sound traditions always observed among the Powers, the Berlin Cabinet abstained from communicating what had taken place to the Imperial Government, notwithstanding that the latter had officially requested information from Count Bismarck as to the King's real intentions when the subject was under consideration at Berlin on the first occasion, whilst at the same time expressing the natural anxiety that was felt in regard to it. Everything had been arranged so that the surprise should be keen and penetrating, so that it might be deeply felt. They were in hopes France would bound at the insult, and that war would break out without having been declared. This conjecture met with disappointment. The excitement was intense and general; the Imperial Government became its mouthpiece in language that was dignified and firm, but in no way offensive; it confined itself to stating that it would ask for an explanation, and in fact instructed our Chargé d'Affaires to do so. At Berlin they had recourse to the system that has always been in practice at the Prussian Court: our representative *ad interim* could only see an Under Secretary of State; Count Bismarck had sought rest in the shade of the trees at Varzin, where he awaited events; the King had left for Ems. The Under Secretary of State affirmed that "the Prussian Government was an absolute stranger to this affair,

and had nothing whatever to do with it.[1] The King might have been associated with the matter as head of the Hohenzollern family, but he had in no way intervened in his quality of King of Prussia."

The representatives of the Berlin Cabinet abroad, in accordance with their instructions, held the same language: The Government of Northern Germany, said the Prussian Ambassador to Lord Granville, has no intention of meddling in this matter; the French are at liberty to do as they please. My colleague at Paris, he added, has received instructions to avoid the subject, and to consent to no discussion in regard to it. . . . Moreover, he continued, it would be premature to discuss this question before the Cortes have ratified the choice of Prince Leopold.[2] The blow had been struck and the hand that had dealt it withdrawn. King and Minister were equally innocent, and free of any insidious thought. When this position had been taken up, they awaited the assembling of the Cortes; they expected Prince Leopold to be elected by acclamation. They relied on Spanish pride to cause the French Government fresh difficulties, which they hoped

[1] In the preceding year, the French Ambassador, in the absence of Count Bismarck, and previous to having an explanation with him, had had an interview with this same functionary, who assured him, on his word of honour, that he had received no information on this subject. The Chancellor, as will have been seen, was less discreet a few days later.

[2] See the *Blue-Book* of 1870, p. 13.

would lead it to extreme measures. It was in this view that the King gave his consent to his nephew's candidature. But as there was no possibility of having an explanation with the Berlin Cabinet, that of Paris, to which every other channel had been closed, gave orders to its Ambassador to repair to Ems, to lay the matter before the King himself and to submit to him the reasons that made it a duty for him to be opposed to the accession of a German Prince to the throne of Charles V.

From this moment, we see the King, and after him Count Bismarck, during the few days that preceded the outbreak of war, each displaying more distinctly and with greater emphasis, their respective qualities and personalities. The occasion is a solemn one, and we have all the more reason for pausing at it, as by doing so we shall be able to express an opinion on the parts played by the Sovereign and Minister respectively.

What was the aim in raising the Spanish question? It was certainly not to enthrone a Hohenzollern at Madrid. "The sovereignty offered to Prince Leopold," said Count Bismarck to the French Ambassador on May 11th, 1869, when he questioned him on the subject, "could only be of ephemeral duration and would expose him to more personal danger than mistakes." There was therefore another object, that of caus-

ing a disagreement with France. This, indeed, was the general feeling in Europe. The Powers and public opinion did not take any other view of the matter. In fact, as soon as the candidature of Prince Leopold was avowed and became imminent, the various Cabinets and even the Sovereigns themselves interposed without seeking to dissemble their surprise and alarm. The Queen of England, and more particularly the Emperor of Russia, sent conciliatory messages to Ems, advising moderation and urging the King to lend himself to an arrangement.[1] The press in all parts, that of London especially, protested against an enterprise that it commented on with extreme severity. "The transaction," said the *Times*, "has the air of a vulgar and impudent *coup d'état* of a kind that is sure not to be successful. The election of a sovereign to such a throne as that of Spain should be a solemn and dignified proceeding, conducted openly in the face of the world, and accompanied by a frank communication with friendly Powers. . . . If there was nothing hostile to France in this negotiation, why conceal it from her? Thus will argue thousands of Frenchmen, and it will not be easy to dispel the prejudice thus produced. . . . It is not in human nature to avoid feeling some

[1] See particularly a despatch from Lord Lyons to Lord Granville of July 13th. (*Blue-Book*, 1870.)

resentment at being tricked; and the present arrangement has to Frenchmen a most unpleasant look of trickery."[1]

The King, in presence of this universal reprobation, was not long in arriving at the conclusion that by persisting in the line of conduct he had been led to follow, war would certainly be the result, but that it would be difficult for him to decline the responsibility of having brought it on. The attitude of France was not what he had anticipated; she had felt the injury, she had intimated what her intentions were; but she had stated them without resorting to any extreme measures or wounding Prussia, and her attitude had been approved by the various Governments. The provocation not having given the results expected, the King altered his mind. He received the French Ambassador, and contrary to his usual habit, contrary to all the traditions of his house, consented to come to an explanation, and to endeavour, with him, to find the means of putting an end to this serious difference. He consulted no one but himself, and was only influenced by the warnings that had been sent to him in a friendly way from London, and particularly from St. Petersburg. Count Bismarck had hastened from Varzin to Berlin and wished to come to Ems; he was not authorised to do so.

[1] *The Times*, July 8th, 1870.—*Translator.*

The King feared his interference at this juncture ; he kept him at a distance from the scene of the negotiations, wishing to have them in his own hands, and feeling, no doubt, that he had been ill-advised in bringing matters to a climax, or had done so prematurely.

However, he did not despair of setting things right again, by causing difficulties and complications to arise from the discussions in which he was about to engage, that would produce what he desired. He conceded Prince Leopold's desistance, or rather he promised to approve of it as soon as it was made known, but he refused to undertake to exact it. He arranged with Prince Anthony for his son's renunciation to take place in a way and under circumstances that would be disobliging to France. Whilst sacrificing the principle, he applied himself with immense skill, we should say with monstrous treachery, to discovering a way to entangle the Imperial Government in the form. We know how well he succeeded.

Prince Leopold's desistance was signified by his father to General Prim, by an unciphered telegram sent through Paris, and conceived in terms calculated to irritate the French Cabinet ; and this was done before the King had communicated the information to the French Ambassador. It was thus established to the satisfaction of persons of no very great discernment, that the concession had

been spontaneously made by the candidate to the Spanish crown without the King having had anything to do with it, and that he, on his side, had made no concession to France. Every one, however, was aware that the Hohenzollern Princes could not come to a decision of such serious importance, of such great interest at that particular moment, without the consent of the head of their family, and the expedient could deceive nobody. But it was known that the feeling of exasperation at Paris was keen and general, and it was hoped that this would lead both Government and population astray. Did these calculations enter into the King's mind? Everything tends to give one that impression; what, unfortunately, is only too certain, is that Prince Leopold's renunciation, which was made public before having been notified to the French Cabinet, was not considered by the latter to be sufficient satisfaction. It was thought necessary, the past being over, to obtain assurances for the future, and the King was asked to promise, through the intermediary of the French Ambassador, that he would not, on any other occasion, authorise a prince of his house to become a candidate to the throne of Spain. The Minister of Foreign Affairs esteemed it, moreover, opportune and proper to request the King to write a letter to the Emperor, for publication, in which he would repudiate any evil intention. He

expressed that desire to the Prussian Ambassador at Paris, who was obliged to transmit it to Ems.[1]

Prince Leopold's retirement was welcomed by the foreign Cabinets and press as a guarantee for the maintenance of peace: they believed this henceforth ensured. Without troubling about the question of form, they accorded the conqueror of Sadowa credit for the proof he had given, under difficult circumstances, of his personal feelings. The new departure of the French Cabinet was, on the contrary, regarded as a fresh and unfortunate obstacle to the resumption of a good understanding between France and Prussia. The King perceived the parts were reversed: he broke off the negotiations, feeling convinced that he could now accuse the Imperial Government of having obstinately desired war; he authorised Count Bismarck to neglect nothing to make it inevitable at an early date. This happened on the morning of July 13th; on the 14th, he left for Berlin, where he went to preside over the mobilisation of the army in person.

We have described what the King did in this great crisis; let us see how the Minister acted. The details will not be out of place here: it is, indeed, indispensable to sketch the most essential of them, in order to throw light on events and give them their proper colour. Count Bismarck, reduced

[1] See Baron Werther's despatch, dated July 12th, 1870.

to abstention and silence, was fuming at Berlin. In his familiar circle, he had naught but bitter words for his master. He reproached him with endangering the dignity and interests of Germany by his attitude and concessions. He obeyed, however, observing a reserve that weighed upon him cruelly. As soon as he received orders to bestir himself, as soon as he was placed in possession of his freedom of action again, he appeared like a bomb upon the scene; and before that 13th of July was over, there remained not a vestige of the hopes the friends of peace had been nursing on the previous eve. It was particularly on this occasion that Count Bismarck displayed all the resources of his brain and his marvellous activity: he instantly finds more expedients than he requires to hurry on a rupture, and he uses them with equal precision and rapidity. He recalls the Prussian Ambassador accredited to the French Government, by telegraph; he enjoins him to leave Paris within forty-eight hours, reproaching him with having listened to, without protestation, and with having transmitted a proposal to Ems that was an outrage for the King. He does not break off relations with France—he wishes to force the Imperial Government to make the rupture—but he declares it to be his determined intention not to renew any negotiations, and not to lend himself to any conciliatory measure

or any agreement. At the same instant he informs the various European Governments, by means of a circular-despatch sent by telegraph to all his diplomatic agents, of the incidents of the morning at Ems, giving an inexact and perfidious account of them. "The French Ambassador, having insisted," he says, "on guarantees for the future, after Prince Leopold's desistance, his Majesty refused to receive him any more, and sent word to him, by the aide-de-camp on duty, that he had nothing further to communicate to him." [1]

This was announcing to Europe, contrary to truth, that the King had forbidden the Ambassador to present himself at his residence. It is not our intention to dwell on the significance and bearing of such treatment inflicted on a diplomatist invested with a dignity which, by a fiction accepted in all times, makes him the representative of his sovereign in person. Count Bismarck affirmed therefore simultaneously, that whilst at Paris the King's majesty had been offended, at Ems the French Ambassador had been shown the door. After having done what was necessary abroad, he turns his attention to public opinion in Germany, with a view to exciting and embittering it. The

[1] The assertion was entirely inexact. The Ambassador had seen the King and had communicated the proposal to him. The King had declined to accede to it, but only after having discussed it with him.

famous *department of the public mind* whispers arrogant and offensive language to all the newspapers. "The King and nation," they say, "have been outraged; the whole country must rise and wreak vengeance for such a grave offence." All through the evening the boys who cry out the newspapers sell sheets containing pretended telegrams giving accounts of the insult to the King and the insult to the Ambassador; whereas, in reality, the Ambassador is taking leave of the Prussian monarch, who welcomes him at this last meeting as at the others, with his usual courtesy, from which he has never had any reason to depart. Count Bismarck thus closes—and he has no other aim—all channels to any possible arrangement.

He did not, indeed, attempt to conceal his real intentions. Since his return from Varzin, his door had not opened to a single diplomatist: he was fretting and fuming, and did not wish to make an exhibition of himself. On the 13th, he received the British Ambassador. According to the Chancellor, there was only one guilty party in the whole affair: France. She was not satisfied with the solution of the Spanish question, he said to Lord Augustus Loftus; other demands were made; it was evident that she was seeking her revenge for Königgrätz. Public feeling in Prussia, in Germany, would not submit to humiliation; he disapproved of the King's conciliatory attitude at Ems: Count

Bismarck, continues the British Ambassador in reporting this interview, then declared that unless France gave assurances, made an official declaration to the European Powers, recognising that the existing solution of the Spanish question satisfied her and that no other contention would be raised later on ; and that if, moreover, she did not retract or explain the Duc de Gramont's threatening language, the Prussian Government would be compelled to demand satisfaction. It is impossible for Prussia to keep quiet and peaceful after the affront given to the King and country by the menacing tone of the French Government. And the Ambassador concluded his despatch by expressing the conviction, after listening to Count Bismarck, that unless some mediating influence succeeded in exercising *pressure on the French Government*, in appeasing the feeling of irritation against Prussia and in causing moderation to prevail, war was inevitable.

Count Bismarck was of the same opinion as his master ; he thought as did the latter that the parts were reversed. Henceforth it was France that owed satisfaction to Prussia, and Prussia meant to have it, or she would be *neither quiet nor peaceful.* It must, however, be pointed out that the Imperial Government, in answer to an interpellation from the Left, had given explanations on Prince Leopold's candidature in the sitting of July

6th. Up to the 13th, neither the King nor his Government saw any outrage in the statement made on that occasion, by the Duc de Gramont; negotiations were opened at Ems, they were pursued, without any intention being expressed of demanding redress. On the 13th there is a complete change: the offence exists; it has attained the King and country, and satisfaction is loudly called for; it must be exemplary, public, submitted to all the Powers. France must formally retract, and in language that has not hitherto been used in similar circumstances, or else Germany will be under the necessity of considering what steps she must take. Count Bismarck correctly presumed that France would not bend to such humiliation, that she would prefer appealing to arms, and he would have been greatly disappointed, as would also the King, had she consented to the expiation he contemplated imposing on her for her so-called misdeeds. Events were not in accordance with his previsions. France, in answer to the Prussian insults and pretensions, declared war without waiting, like Austria in 1866, for her territory to be invaded by the German armies which were being mobilised with all speed. But it is beyond argument that Prussia rendered war inevitable, and that her resolution to engage in it was at this moment irrevocably formed. We shall find conclusive proof of this in the diplomatic

despatches published in London at the time. On July 14th England made a proposal which would have been perfectly satisfactory to Prussia. The King, it was suggested, having authorised Prince Leopold to accept the Spanish crown, had made himself in a certain sense a party to the arrangement; he could in the same way and with perfect dignity, communicate to the French Government his consent to the withdrawal of the acceptance, and France would renounce her demand for an undertaking guaranteeing the future.[1] How did Count Bismarck receive this overture, which was certainly of a nature to settle everything? His reply was haughty and laconic. He telegraphed to the Prussian Ambassador at London to express his regret that the Government of her Britannic Majesty had thought proper to make a suggestion which he could not recommend the King to adopt.[2] He had assuredly already regretted not having been authorised to sever all connection with France as far back as July 6th, by taking as a pretext the language used by the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the Corps Législatif. He had endeavoured to persuade the King to adopt that course; everything tends to show it. But the King, influenced by the solicitations

[1] Despatch from Lord Granville to Lord Augustus Loftus, at Berlin, dated July 14th. (*Blue Book*, 1870.)

[2] Despatch from Lord Granville to Lord Lyons, at Paris, dated July 15th. (*Id.*)

addressed direct to him at Ems, by the feeling of irritation displayed on all sides, and of which the press became the mouthpiece in unmeasured terms, had absolutely refused. This opportunity being lost, the Chancellor discovered another, that which the King had so skilfully prepared for him; and we have just shown how eagerly he grasped it, and the use he made of the liberty of action restored to him.

It has been asserted that the candidature of Prince Leopold was never, in the minds of those who prepared it, aught but a snare set for our pride and national susceptibility, ever ready to be led astray. This conjecture is certainly not without foundation. What Count Bismarck said on the subject of that candidature to the French Ambassador in 1869, the habit they had at Berlin of resorting to expedients that cannot be qualified as diplomatic measures, gives one authority to think so. But if the trap was set by the Minister with his sovereign's consent, who was it held the string at the decisive moment? Who adroitly concealed the snare? Who had the wit to entice France into it? The King, the King only, and without his Minister's assistance.

Could so firm a will, such lucid foresight, such patient perseverance have been the inheritance of a prince who had ever been irresolute and timid? There is not a writer, who, in giving an account

of these events which are so near at hand, has not attributed the initiative and direction in all things and on all occasions to Count Bismarck; who has not shown himself convinced, and sought to persuade his readers, that the Minister conceived all and did all; who has not affirmed that he made greater efforts to obtain his master's adhesion to his policy, than he took trouble to ensure its success. It is true that the irascible President of the Council's complaints, or rather lamentations, have been noted by diplomacy as well as by the press. The correspondence of agents residing at Berlin at that period, which has been published and can be consulted,[1] forms in a measure their daily echo. It reveals the monarch's resistance to the minister, the difficulties the latter encountered in *leading* him on, in overcoming his *scruples* and *superstitions.* These complaints, these affirmations of Count Bismarck, exact in the sense that the King refused to hurry, erroneous in reality, which are met with in all the official documents, have certainly contributed not a little to lead public opinion astray, and along with it the publicists who, in all conscientiousness, have engaged in the task of sketching out the history of our times.

[1] See particularly the reports of General Govone, who negotiated the Prusso-Italian Treaty in *Un po più di luce*, by General La Marmora.

The King assuredly wished to be led on, but by the occasional factitious force of circumstances, and not by pressure on the part of his advisers. He desired to show that he had not forgotten either his ideas or scruples; he wished to keep his aureola of prince by divine right intact and pure from all stain; he aimed especially at appearing respectful of the sovereign rights of the princes confederated with him; whilst he premeditated stripping them; and all Count Bismarck's art, let us, if you will, say all his artifices, could not make him go to war until he considered hostilities authorised by circumstances. William I. wished to affirm openly in 1870, as he had done in 1866, that he was not the *aggressor*, that he took up arms for the purpose only of defending his country against *foreign invasion;* and we have just seen that, by his personal action, he succeeded better on the second occasion than on the first.

How is it possible that this King, who resisted, without ever yielding, the entreaties of his family, of his most devoted servants, of all the German princes, how could this monarch who had heard the principal cities of his kingdom, Parliament, the press, the whole country, protest against a policy which was denounced as perilous and senseless, how could this sovereign, so tenacious and obstinate, have submitted blindly and with such great servility to the direction of an imperious minister?

Had it been so, history would have to deal with a psychological problem which modern science, notwithstanding all its investigations, would have difficulty in explaining. The King denied the existence of the treaty with Italy, and we have mentioned with what object; but he signed it, he ratified it with a perfect knowledge of what he was doing; and it would really be imposing on the credulity of the public to pretend that he failed to perceive all its importance, that he was persuaded or deceived by Count Bismarck, who had explained to him that its sole purport was to make Austria reflect. He had no more hope than had the man of iron of expelling Austria from Germany by intimidation and without having recourse to force; and this monarch, who is represented as wavering and uncertain, ignoring to what extremities he was being led, was nevertheless preparing for those extremities without pause, notwithstanding the efforts made on every side to stop him in the line of conduct he was pursuing. He knew the connection Count Bismarck had formed in Italy, at Bucharest, at Pesth, with the revolutionary party and all the enemies of Austria —General La Marmora's work is edifying in that respect—and he permitted it, Count Bismarck had all his confidence. We iterate that he affirmed on every occasion that he had no aggressive or warlike thoughts. He even repeatedly employed

confidential agents to negotiate, or at least to prepare, an arrangement with the Cabinet of Vienna without Count Bismarck's knowledge ;[1] but nothing turned him from the path he had traced out for himself, nor did he make the least effort to turn his Minister away from it, and yet he could have revoked him, to the general satisfaction of his subjects and the whole of Europe. His conscience was quite at ease, and all these contradictory acts were reconciled by his idea of political morality.

It is therefore permissible to say that William I., from the commencement of his reign, when he dismissed the Ministry of the *New Era*, until the woeful year, followed a policy of his own without ever departing from it ; that he had marked out and defined its aim before Count Bismarck ever came to power ; that, finally, he took an active and always preponderant part in the direction that was given to it. He retired into the background, certainly, when he considered such a step would be advantageous to State affairs, and he frequently acted thus to avoid pledging himself personally or compromising the dignity of his crown ; he had recourse to practices that were only justifiable by the aim he had in view. To that end he did homage himself to the capacity of the men he had gathered round him, and to the services they rendered him. Count Moltke com-

[1] See *Un po più di luce*, p. 288.

manded his armies, Count Bismarck appeared to direct his policy with absolute independence; both distinguished themselves without his ever having shown the least jealousy, without his ever having attempted to turn any part of the glory they conquered to his own account. But he was constantly interfering, and when necessary imposed his will. He never divested himself of any part of his authority, and great resolutions were never taken but when he considered them well conceived, well prepared, and the moment favourable for them to be put into action.

Assuredly, war could have been engaged in against either Austria or France at times that were particularly advantageous, from a strictly military point of view, as the generals wished; but it would have been necessary to have had the audacity to acknowledge that he was actuated by a thirst for conquest, as Frederick II. did when he invaded Silesia. Such temerity is not suitable to our age, and the King acted as a skilful politician in waiting for the opportunity when he could make war without too openly offending the public sense of right, without exposing himself to an understanding, if not a coalition, of the Powers. He was therefore well advised in restraining Count Bismarck's impatience, and there was all the more merit in his having done so, as he alone was of that opinion in the Council. One cannot

say at the present day what would have happened, to what complications and dangers Prussia might have been exposed, had she taken up arms prematurely and without having a plausible pretext, whereas, thanks to the invincible prudence of her monarch, she was able to engage in the struggle, on both occasions, without placing her relations with other Courts in jeopardy, without submitting to their mediation, without dreading their resentment. All was over before it was perceived what a preponderant influence the House of Hohenzollern would exert in Europe; and this, in truth, is personally due to the King.

What must be recognised is, that these two prodigious labourers at Germany's greatness, King William and Prince Bismarck, were gifted with various and mighty qualities, and that one was the complement to the other. The first had prudence and, let us say it, duplicity; the second, daring and resolution. What was excessive in these very contrary dispositions was neutralised in an even measure by the action of one upon the other; let us add this providential amendment, that the master, who could impose his will always, displayed as much reserve as skill in doing so. What must also be noted, is that the King assumed an open air of non-interference that was deceiving; he affected to aspire to "moral conquests" only, whilst never ceasing to lay claim to

such as were of a more substantial nature, and, when necessary, upheld his pretensions sword in hand; the Minister, on the contrary, tired out all the echoes in Europe with his plans of aggression and threats. "Every one sees what you appear to be; few know what you really are," said the Florentine master;[1] and it is thus that Prince Bismarck has been acclaimed as the restorer of the German Empire, whilst the King seems to have been only the beneficiary. Have not contemporaries been deceived by the clangorous clatter of the one, by the impenetrable silence of the other, and will not impartial history reform their judgment by meting out to each of these two great figures the justice which is due to him? Will it not give the Sovereign a share equal to that of the Chancellor, if not greater? We venture to think so, and express our opinion without fear, however paradoxical such a conjecture may seem at this time.

[1] *The Prince*, ch. xvii

*July 15th*, 1890.

# THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE.

GERMANY in 1879 concluded a treaty of defensive alliance with Austria; Italy joined this alliance in 1882. Is this three-fold agreement a pact of peace, as is affirmed, a diplomatic notion, having no other object than to guarantee this blessing to Europe, which assuredly desires to preserve it? Will not this praiseworthy idea, and the arrangements it has given rise to, be followed by unforeseen consequences far different to those hoped for? This question is forced on all who desire the public weal: it troubles them and, we might add, causes them anxiety. We will endeavour to inquire into it without pretending to solve it. We will do our best to discover under the influence of what circumstances, in view of what necessities, and by what foresight the three Powers entered into this agreement. We will investigate the situation they have produced, and the obligations it imposes on them and on the other Powers, in order to show, in addition to

what is generally known, the true character of the conventions which unite them, as well as to forecast ultimate results. The task is a difficult one; we are well aware that it is rash to attempt it. We undertake it, however, with no other design than to assist in elucidating a state of affairs that has its perils; perils that can be easily perceived if one chooses to be sincere. It is, in fact, armed peace that the three Powers have organised, and can peace under arms be lasting? Are not the treaties that were signed at Vienna and Berlin rather a portent of war? Will they preserve the Continent from fresh calamities? It is particularly from this point of view that we propose to consider them.

All shows that Count Bismarck was the originator of these conventional stipulations. They were conceived and drawn up to the advantage of the German Empire, which reaps the most benefit from them. One can easily see that the German Chancellor was the first to entertain the idea of this agreement, and that he bestowed all his care on its realisation. But at what time and under what circumstances did his active mind conceive this scheme? how is it that he came to suggest it to Austria? It is known now that during the negotiations opened at Nikolsburg in 1866, there arose a serious difference of opinion between King William and his Prime Minister.

The monarch sought to impose sacrifices on Austria which Count Bismarck considered too heavy and also impolitic. When the Minister left the ground clear of any insurmountable obstacle to an ulterior agreement between the Courts of Berlin and Vienna, was he influenced by the necessity of coming rapidly to an understanding with the enemy of yesterday in order to have a free hand to fight the foe of to-morrow? His flatterers accord him all these calculations, all these previsions, the wisdom of which a near future was to demonstrate to the world. If one is to credit them, his sagacious foresight led him to embody in the treaty of peace the germ of the agreement which now secures Austria's armed co-operation to Germany. To men to whom fate has predestined great achievements, it is easy to attribute the virtue of foreseeing events and of being prepared for them in advance. Genius certainly has, at times, these visions of the remote hereafter. But, be that as it may, it is unquestionable that the founder of the future German Empire overcame the King's cupidity at Nikolsburg. In spite of the efforts of the Great General Staff he persuaded the sovereign to forego his intention of wresting territory from the Emperor Francis Joseph. Peace concluded under these conditions respected the integrity of the Empire of the Habsburgs, and did not leave

any incurable wound behind it. The future remained open for a reconciliation, for any arrangements that new and mutual interests might dictate.

Similar thoughts, it would appear, filled Count Bismarck's mind at Versailles. He is understood to have had the same visions. He has himself stated that, after the first successes of the German arms, he considered the double mutilation inflicted on France at the conclusion of peace an ill-advised exaction full of peril for the future. Strassburg is the door of our house, he is reported to have said, and we are bound to claim Alsace, which is German land. But, if his opinion had prevailed, France would have retained Lorraine. After succeeding at Nikolsburg, Count Bismarck, in his turn, appears to have succumbed at Versailles. Twenty years have come and gone since then, and events have not yet shown that he was not on each occasion the wisest and most circumspect of King William's counsellors.

It may therefore be admitted that, whilst negotiating peace at Nikolsburg, Count Bismarck had a presentiment that it would one day be possible, and even expedient, to renew friendly relations with Austria by reconstituting the solidarity of former times ; and it is permissible to believe that, with this object in view, he wisely curbed his master's ambition. In fact it has come to pass that Germany, under the influence of

fresh complications, has found it necessary to change her line of policy, and to seek at Vienna the co-operation, the sympathies, and, in a word, the support which she had hitherto always found at St. Petersburg. To fully appreciate this serious evolution, to determine its causes and character, it is necessary to go back to the origin of the events that have made Prussia's greatness, to the genesis of the work undertaken by the King and his Prime Minister.

## I.

The result of the Crimean war was not only the disarmament of Russia in the East; it had another and far more durable consequence, that of destroying the union of the three Northern powers — the Holy Alliance. When Herr von Bismarck made his commencement at Frankfort, he must have been convinced that Prussia was isolated in Europe, and that in Germany she had to resign herself to submitting to the humiliating domination of Austria who "alone," according to Count Buol, her Prime Minister, "had a right to an independent policy in the Confederation." Herr von Bismarck's patriotism was roused. Anxious and vigilant, he carefully observed the attitude of the Powers from the post in which he had been placed. He drew attention to the rumours of a

reconciliation, of an understanding between the Emperor Alexander and the Emperor Napoleon, and of an interview which was shortly to unite these two Sovereigns at Stuttgart. He entreated his Government to act. And what was it that this bold man suggested? To join France in an intimate alliance.[1]

When one glances back to that year 1857, when one recalls how long they hesitated at Berlin before recognising the restoration of the Empire with the third Napoleon, and when one considers that Herr von Bismarck himself was only just emerging from the sacred phalanx of the most obdurate feudalism, all the errors of which he had shared, one is amazed at the boldness and the novelty of the conception. And indeed it

[1] In two reports of the months of May and June 1857, wherein he enters fully into his reasons for the conclusion he has arrived at. "Russia is drawing visibly closer to France," he wrote; "we must be beforehand with her. If we are late in joining this league, Prussia will only occupy a secondary position in it." But to enter into an alliance with France, would it not be compounding with the revolution? Herr von Bismarck foresees the objection, and resolutely combats it. "If the Bonapartes," he said, "are the result of the revolution, they have bridled it. The Bourbon dynasty, even without Philippe Égalité, has done more for the revolution than the Bonapartes." And, invoking all the interests, all the precedents which justified Prussia in forgetting the past, and thinking only of the future, he added: "'Your shirt is nearer to you than your doublet,' and it is urgent, if one has the least ambition, to come to an understanding with Paris so as to secure a suitable place in a Franco-Russian alliance and guarantees against the domination of Austria." (*Lettres Politiques de M. de Bismarck*, pp. 279 and following. Ollendorf, Paris.)

deeply offended the Court of Sans-Souci. Censured by General von Gerlach, the confidant and intimate adviser of Frederick William IV., Herr von Bismarck reserved himself for the new reign.

We know with what plans William I. ascended the throne. "Before engaging in a war to the south or the east of the kingdom," had written Frederick the Great, "every Prussian Prince should secure the neutrality of Russia, cost what it might, if he were unable to obtain her support." The future Emperor remembered his glorious ancestor's warning, and, soon after his accession, he entrusted to Herr von Bismarck the task of assisting him in carrying out this first part of his programme. Thoroughly appreciating this underrated servant's devotedness and the merit of this quarrelsome and decried diplomatist, he appointed him his ambassador at the Court of the Emperor Alexander.

People were acquainted, at that time, with but one feature of Herr von Bismarck's character, the most prominent one, that which made him conspicuous the moment he entered public life : smart activity in fault-finding, dissembling neither the object in view nor the means by which it was to be attained, notorious examples of which he had given both at Berlin and Frankfort. The warmth of his constant verbosity, the intemperance of his language, did not seem to have designated him

for a delicate mission which required, above all, moderation, discretion, tact in speech as well as in acts and manner, in short, all those acquirements which Herr von Bismarck seemed to lack. He was, nevertheless, able to justify his Sovereign's confidence. This violent, imperious personage became converted; he revealed himself at St. Petersburg a gentle charmer, an alluring dreamer; he found favour with the Emperor Alexander. This monarch, who was of an unconfiding and thoughtful mind, could only be won over slowly, by the aid of patient insinuations: Herr von Bismarck took the necessary time and succeeded.

At St. Petersburg he met Prince Gortchakoff again, then recently appointed Chancellor of the Empire. He had known him and studied him at Frankfort. The same ideas and a deep animosity towards Austria had drawn them together. The one did not forgive that country the share it had taken in humbling Russia in the East; the other was already meditating its expulsion from Germany. The understanding between them arose as much from their respective dispositions as from the interests entrusted to their charge. Herr von Bismarck nursed it assiduously. He knew that the Russian Chancellor had a great idea of his own personal value; he flattered him, and dazzled him with the glory that would be attached to his name, the brilliant services he would be rendering his country

by undertaking to efface the trace of its recent disasters. The obstacle was at Vienna; in the ambition of Austria who, dreading Russian influence on the Danube and in the Balkans, would never cease to make every effort to impede it. She had had no other object during the Eastern war; as had been amply shown by the hostile and cavilling attitude of her representatives at the Paris Congress. Herr von Bismarck pointed out to him that this was the policy he had to resist, whilst offering him Prussia's co-operation whenever it might be needed.

Varying his words and displaying equal ability, at one time with the sovereign, at another with the minister, he succeeded in dispelling the mistrust which the ambiguous behaviour of the Berlin Cabinet and its illogical abstention during the Eastern war had created in their minds. King William, moreover, seconded his efforts by repudiating a policy with which he personally had had nothing to do and which he entirely disavowed. He brought into play that gentle and insinuating amenity of which he possessed the secret, and which enabled him to exercise over his nephew, at the most solemn and decisive moments of his reign, an influence which has proved so disastrous to Russia. When Herr von Bismarck was recalled from St. Petersburg in the spring of 1862 his task had been performed: he left the Russian Court in

a cordial and kindly mood, which he and his Sovereign intended to take good advantage of at the first opportunity.

This opportunity was not long in coming forward. Herr von Bismarck, despatched from St. Petersburg to Paris in 1862, only remained a short time in France. A few months after his arrival, he was recalled to Berlin, and, in September of the same year, the King appointed him President of his Council with the portfolio for Foreign Affairs. At that moment Poland was stirring; she demanded the national institutions confirmed by the treaties of 1815. Disturbances soon broke out, and the Prussian Government, faithful to the promises of which Herr von Bismarck had been so prodigal during his stay at St. Petersburg and anxious to secure the sympathies of the Emperor Alexander, offered Russia its armed assistance. On February 8th 1863, the two Powers signed a secret treaty having for object the prompt suppression of the Polish movement. This first negotiation was Herr von Bismarck's initial success; he consolidated the interests of the two Powers both for the time being and in the future. He had set all the more value on this achievement as Austria was following a very different line of conduct. She had, in fact, allowed one of her provinces, Galicia, to become the arsenal of the revolution. This understanding which had been so much desired and the founda-

tions of which Herr von Bismarck had been entrusted to lay at St. Petersburg, was now secured and firmly established. Prussia had resumed her intimate relations with Russia. Austria, on the other hand, had added to her errors, and had more deeply displeased the Court of St. Petersburg. This was soon seen in the matter of the Duchies, and later on during the war which the Berlin Cabinet was already planning against the Empire of the Habsburgs.

## II.

Prussia, taking advantage of the disturbances which convulsed Europe in 1848, and of the difficulties into which the revolution plunged Austria, had occupied Holstein and invaded Schleswig. The Emperor Nicholas, allied to the house of Holstein-Gottorp, after overcoming the Hungarian insurrection, and possessing contingent rights to a portion of the Danish territory, summoned his brother-in-law Frederick William IV. to recall his troops; and a treaty guaranteeing the King of Denmark the integrity of his dominions was signed in London in 1852. But the spirit of conquest, far from disarming at Berlin, was destined, on the contrary, to become more firmly established with the new reign. William I., on ascending the throne, gave startling testimony, at the opening of the

Chambers, of his sympathy with the Germans of the Duchies. The Danish question, in spite of the treaty of 1852, was still under consideration by the Diet. Count Bismarck, certain now of meeting with no hostility from Russia, seized upon it. We know how he dealt with it. The history of the negotiations which preceded the conquest of the Elbe provinces is a most strange but scarcely an edifying one. It has been written [1] and deserves to be pondered over by whosoever is desirous of learning how the destinies of nations are accomplished. Therein we behold Count Bismarck inaugurating his work with all the audacity of a daring statesman. We will only avail ourselves here of the part bearing on our subject.

Russia, grateful for the military and diplomatic [2] assistance Prussia had rendered her in regard to Poland, whilst England, France, and Austria were

[1] *Étude de Diplomatie contemporaine*, by M. L. Klaczko. Paris : Furne, Jouvet, and Co.

[2] In the month of October 1863, the British Government determined to declare that Russia had forfeited her rights over Poland, rights which had been conceded to her in 1815 upon conditions which, so the English Government claimed, she had ceased to fulfil. The Berlin Cabinet intervened and caused its Ambassador at London to represent to the authorities that, if they desired the maintenance of European peace, they must abandon an attitude which, attributing impliedly to Poland the quality of a belligerent State, would be considered by the King's Government as an "aggression against the rights of Prussia." This was tantamount to a threat of war. The messenger bearing the English communication was on the road to St. Petersburg : Lord John Russell recalled him by telegraph.

seeking to unite together — in vain by the way — so as to fetter her liberty, yielded to all the covetousness of the Berlin Cabinet. To please Prussia, she consented to forget the contingent rights of the Romanoffs, at one time so forcibly laid claim to by the Emperor Nicholas. She went further than mere abstention; she supported all the claims Prussia put forward, first to occupy Holstein and then to invade Schleswig, thereby neutralising the efforts of the Cabinets of Paris and London in defence of Denmark.

These facts are henceforth a matter of history, and they show that King William owed the first successes of his arms and diplomacy to the goodwill of the St. Petersburg Cabinet. It was the duty of England and France to see that the Court of Berlin respected the Treaty of London: it was equally Russia's duty to do so. The interests of the three Powers were identical. Their union, a loyal understanding, would have sufficed to stay Prussia's ambition in its first flight. But the Cabinets of London and Paris did not succeed in devising measures, in adopting a common policy, separated as they were by disagreements that had arisen out of the Italian war and by the cession of Savoy and Nice to France. Russia, on her side, deluded by misleading assurances, borne away by the resentment she entertained against Austria, offended at the intimations of France

and England, and at the agreement they were negotiating between themselves and the Court of Vienna in order to extort from her certain concessions in Poland which wounded her pride, Russia, we say, only intervened in the matter of the Duchies for the purpose of facilitating the task undertaken by Count Bismarck and his Sovereign.

In truth, Count Bismarck was reaping the harvest of the marvellous ability he had displayed at the time of his mission to St. Petersburg and of the wise resolution with which he had directed Prussia's attitude at the time of the Polish insurrection. Under the reign of the Emperor Nicholas, and with his faithful Chancellor Count Nesselrode, would the Government of the King of Prussia have been so well favoured? In 1832 Russia had overcome, on the banks of the Vistula, a far more serious revolt than that of 1863 without the assistance of her neighbour; and we have seen with what haughtiness the Muscovite Emperor, determined to restrain German covetousness and to protect the interests of his empire on the Baltic, forced the Prussians to evacuate the Duchies which they had seized whilst his armies were preserving the Habsburg monarchy on the plains of Hungary.

But how was it, one may ask, that Austria submitted to the pressure of Berlin? Her docility may be easily explained and understood. The

Austrian statesman who had forced the act of penitence from Prussia which her Prime Minister had performed at Olmütz, Prince Schwarzenberg, was dead. He had had several successors, but had never been replaced. He alone could have measured swords with the Brandenburg squire, and it would have been an interesting spectacle to have seen these two valiant gladiators, equally energetic, equally audacious, and fired by the same patriotism, struggling for supremacy in Germany. But, since the restorer of the Austrian monarchy had quitted the scene, the Emperor Francis Joseph had lost Lombardy, and he was full of anxiety with reference to Venetia, which was claimed by the Italians. Under these conditions Russia's hostility compelled him to nurse the sympathies of his confederates, his allies in a fresh conflict. The whole of Germany, princes and people alike, had passionately espoused the cause of the Duchies. Austria could not therefore desert it. She was forced to follow Prussia in the campaign undertaken against Denmark. She imagined, moreover, that her participation would enable her to direct, to restrain, the plans of the Court of Berlin. She was mistaken. She had to follow Prussia even to the dismemberment of Denmark. Declaring valueless the titles of the pretenders, whom nevertheless they had professed to defend, and without troubling about the

autonomy of the Duchies, which was originally the bone of contention between the Danish Government and Germany, the two Powers forced King Christian IX. to abandon to them his rights over Schleswig and Holstein by threatening Jutland. They despoiled him.

The joint sovereignty over these territories, and their simultaneous occupation by the troops of the two nations, upset Count Bismarck's calculations. In 1865, he arranged with, or rather forced upon, the Vienna Cabinet an agreement which was drawn up and signed at Gastein, in virtue of which each of the two Powers should separately administer one of the Duchies without prejudice to their respective and sovereign rights over the whole of the conquered territory. This understanding was severely judged at London and Paris. "On what principles," inquired M. Drouyn de Lhuys, in a circular that has been made public, "does the Austro-Prussian combination rest? We regret to find no other foundation than force, no other justification than the reciprocal convenience of the two copartners." Prince Gortchakoff showed no sign. This silence on the part of the St. Petersburg Cabinet was significant. France and England had assuredly a manifest interest in the maintenance of the integrity of the Danish Kingdom, but Russia's interest was paramount to theirs; it was directly

connected with the security of the Empire, and at present she no doubt regrets having sacrificed it, having surrendered the port of Kiel to Germany.

We have dwelt perhaps overlong on this initial exploit of Prussian policy. But it was the first link in the chain that bound Russia to Prussia until it broke, when the friends became adversaries to such a point that Prince Bismarck conceived the triple alliance which is the subject of our study. It was necessary, therefore, in order to deduce effects from their causes, to recall precisely the circumstances which united the two Courts.

## III.

In the plans of the Prussian Government the affair of the Duchies was merely the prologue of the drama brought to a climax in Germany. The moment was drawing nigh for engaging on the supreme solution imagined at Berlin, of dispossessing Austria of the ancient influence she exercised over her confederates. The King undertook to sharpen the sword that was to secure victory, the Minister to bring about the occasion for a conflict. The Gastein agreement had been scarcely signed when they entered a kind of suit against the Cabinet of Vienna. Finding fault with all its acts in Holstein which it was administering, with the attitude and even the words of

its agents, Count Bismarck accused it of compounding now with the inhabitants, now with the pretenders, to the detriment of the rights secured to Prussia. He originated a diplomatic correspondence calculated to irritate Austria and provoke a quarrel. To render her the more uneasy he did not disguise his intentions. The Emperor Francis Joseph's Government was warned, and it opposed prudent reserve to the vehemence of the Prussian Minister's reproaches. "Austria does not wish for war," said a diplomatist to Count Bismarck, "and she will be careful not to give you a pretext for it." "I have a whole bagful of pretexts," replied the future Chancellor, "and even of plausible reasons. When the time comes war will break out without even surprising any one." This was the state of affairs in the early part of 1866. The rifles failing to go off in the Duchies, notwithstanding a great desire to create some incident, Count Bismarck raised the question of Federal reform at Frankfort. Of all the pretexts that he had in reserve, he selected the one which was the most certain to bring the two Powers to a prompt rupture, and war, as he had predicted, followed as an inevitable result.

One must not imagine, however, that William I. and his Minister entered upon such a formidable struggle without having weighed its chances and guarded against its perils. "God is never with

the aggressor," was the utterance of the Emperor Alexander in 1812, at the moment when Napoleon was about to invade Russia. The King, recalling those words which he had learnt in his early youth and deeply pondered over, had embodied their principle in his programme. He desired war as ardently as his counsellors, he had prepared for it by devoting all his time and all his care to the powerful organisation of his army, but he was unwilling either to openly take the initiative or assume the responsibility: he declined to appear *aggressor*. His Minister neglected no means by which to appease his alarmed conscience, and Austria herself assisted thereat by declining a Congress. And when, after Sadowa, the King victoriously re-entered his Capital, he considered himself justified, at the opening of the Chambers, in returning thanks to Providence for the grace which had enabled Prussia to ward off *a hostile invasion* from the frontiers.

Was it really to Providence that he should have expressed his gratitude? Was it not rather to France and Russia? Either of these Powers might equally well, and without drawing the sword from the scabbard, have placed obstacles in the way of the realisation of the plans conceived at Berlin. The concentration of an army corps on the Rhine or on the Vistula would have disarmed Prussia and averted hostilities.

All has been said upon French policy at that period, and we could neither examine it nor defend it here without wandering from our subject. What can we say regarding the policy of the Russian Empire? The Prussian Government had given her precious assistance in the Polish matter; but she had more than discharged the debt in the affair of the Duchies; she had in a great measure sacrificed her interests in the Baltic to Prussia. How is it, therefore, that she tolerated the unjustifiable aggression against Austria? Why did she permit Prussia to upset for her own benefit an order of things established by the unanimous agreement of the Powers at the Vienna Congress, thanks to which the St. Petersburg Cabinet was enabled to exercise a preponderating influence in the affairs of Germany for half a century? We must believe that nothing could turn the Russian Government from the course it had adopted since the Western Powers, in agreement with Austria, had threatened to declare the Czar deprived of his sovereign rights in Poland: his attitude at the outbreak of the war was the guarantee of the approaching success of the Prussian arms. When fortune had loaded King William and Count Bismarck with her favours did they remember this? Did they in their turn show themselves as grateful as the Emperor Alexander and Prince Gortchakoff were after the suppression of

the Polish insurrection? We shall inquire into this later on. For the moment we will bear in mind that it was owing to Russia's goodwill that Prussia was enabled to contend with Austria for the sceptre of absolutism over the Teutonic lands and secure it.

In truth the guns at Sadowa resounded at St. Petersburg as at Paris. It was well understood at both Capitals that the monarchy of the Habsburgs, driven from Germany, would leave an immense void to be filled by Prussia's insatiable ambition. Public opinion was nowhere deceived. France and Russia had been overcome, the same as Austria in the plains of Bohemia. The Government of the Emperor Napoleon sought, but too late, to obtain the compensations promised it. On the other hand, the Government of the Emperor Alexander proposed to have the conditions of peace settled by a Congress. We shall see Prince Bismarck, in presence of the treaty of San Stefano, availing himself of this diplomatic expedient to curtail the concessions which victorious Russia had wrested from the Government of the Sultan. But if it suited him to invoke it in 1877, he had every interest to decline it in 1866. The peril however was great. Austria had been laid low, but she could still furnish allies with a powerful contingent formed of the victors of Custozza. France, uneasy

and anxious, was inclined to be exacting. If Russia, undeceived, became hostile, Prussia might have to face a formidable coalition; she might be forced, under any circumstances, to appear before a gathering of the Powers, who would have kept her pretensions within the bounds dictated by the requirements of their own safety. What were the steps taken by the Cabinet of Berlin to avoid such serious difficulties? It manœuvred to prevent the Powers coming to an understanding, and whilst, in order to gain time, Count Bismarck was *dilatorily* negotiating with France, as he himself has stated, it made every effort to disarm Russia, to win back her goodwill, and strengthen relations which threatened to be severed. Russia once regained, Prussia, it was thought, would have not a single competitor left worth fearing.

General von Manteuffel, the man of confidential missions, was despatched to St. Petersburg. This breast-plated pietist, who possessed a shrewd and insinuating mind, a sympathetic and honourable character, had never stooped to an unworthy action. Though he had never publicly disavowed the systems resorted to by the Berlin Cabinet since Prince Bismarck had presided over it, he had never compounded with them. His upright nature had indeed made him the Prime Minister's rival. He had deserved and won his Sovereign's confidence and the esteem of the Emperor

Alexander, whom he had often had opportunities of approaching. It would have been impossible to have selected an emissary better prepared and more apt to win over and appease the Russian Court. Little inclined as Count Bismarck has invariably been to master his personal animosities, he himself suggested the General to the King for this extra delicate and highly momentous undertaking. So General von Manteuffel, handing over his command of an army in the field to resume his diplomatic career, set out furnished with an autograph letter from the King and the instructions of the President of the Council.

It is known that he acquitted himself to his master's entire satisfaction. Indeed, before his return to Berlin, Russia had withdrawn her proposal to unite the Powers in a Congress, and the diplomatic world perceived that the relations between the two Courts had resumed their character of complete intimacy. It was particularly observed that the Czar's representative at Berlin, alarmed by the success of the Prussian arms, was hastily summoned to St. Petersburg, and that he returned to his post completely reassured, and professing a peace of mind which neither the reverses of the German Princes allied to the Russian dynasty nor the development which Prussia, after the conclusion of hostilities, hastened to give to her military power, have since succeeded in disturbing. All

these circumstances showed even those the least gifted with discernment that a complete understanding was again established between the two Governments. Moreover, from this period they were seen to indicate their policy more plainly, Prussia in Germany and Russia in the East. "I never read the correspondence of the King's Minister at Constantinople," Count Bismarck would say, whenever his attention was called to any impending contingency in Turkey.

It was a fatal and decisive moment when General von Manteuffel overcame Russia's hesitation. A quarter of a century has since elapsed, and now, as on the first day, Europe is perturbed and ever dreading the most serious complications. How is it that the Emperor Alexander and Prince Gortchakoff, having for a time had a clear impression of the dangers to which exalted Prussia was already exposing the peace and equilibrium of Europe — how is it that they decided to resume and continue a policy that was none the less regrettable for Russia herself than for the other Continental States? Had not Prussia shown the measure of her military power and her ambition? Must one suppose that General von Manteuffel was authorised to open up fresh horizons, to promise compensations, to renew more precisely the assurances of a mutual understanding in the East? Has not Prince Bismarck shown himself on many

occasions profuse in aleatory promises? How is it possible, moreover, to understand and justify Russia's behaviour otherwise? What is certain is that from that time, the Prussian Government was able to follow the course of its success in all security. Very soon, indeed, it ceased to disguise its intentions. The treaty of Prague had brought it many important annexations; it had also enabled it to extend its influence over all the North German States, and to add their military contingents to its armies. It wanted still more; it was scheming to place the Southern States under its control, and to hold the whole of Germany from the Alps to the Baltic in its power.

The King and his Prime Minister, however, did not conceal from themselves that by crossing the Main in defiance of the preliminaries of Nikolsburg, Prussia would come into collision with France; that, to crown the work begun, another war would be inevitable. They took the necessary steps for waging it, and when they were fully prepared, when the opportune moment appeared to have arrived, they brought it about very cleverly, certain that Russia would keep Austria in check and maintain a friendly attitude.

In 1870, as in 1866, the Emperor Alexander was arbiter between peace and war. He desired peace; we owe this testimony to the monarch's memory. He sought to preserve it with complete

loyalty at the commencement of the negotiations occasioned by the candidature of a Hohenzollern Prince to the throne of Spain. The correspondence of General Fleury, our Ambassador at St. Petersburg, leaves no doubt on that point. We must admit, however, that the Czar, deceived by the subtleties of the King, his uncle, and bewildered by Prince Gortchakoff's counsels, did not persevere in this feeling. "Russia could not feel the slightest alarm at Prussia's power," the Russian Chancellor had said to the English representative before the outbreak of hostilities. That was his programme throughout the war, and he obtained his sovereign's approval of it. War therefore broke out, and Prussia was able to engage in it and carry it through, in full possession of Russia's sympathies. Either before or during the siege of Paris, Prince Gortchakoff might have called a Congress. He was timidly invited to do so by England, and more firmly by Austria, who suggested to him the idea of converting the neutrals into mediators. He repelled these overtures. By a contradiction familiar to the human mind, he nevertheless had a presentiment of the pitfalls to which his policy was exposing his master's interests. He sought to obtain guarantees. Russia and the Porte, in a convention joined to the treaty concluded at Paris in 1856, had undertaken, under the supervision of the other Powers,

to maintain only a limited number of vessels of war on the Black Sea. After the first reverses of the French arms, the Russian Chancellor declared, without previous understanding and in contempt of public rights, that Russia was exempted from this obligation and free to restore her maritime power in those waters.

Prussia supported and upheld Prince Gortchakoff's decision. Her armies were engaged in fighting from the Rhine to the Loire. It was the moment when Russia's sympathetic abstention was the most needful. Prince Bismarck would have purchased it with far more important concessions. Had Count Nesselrode's successor been endowed with more audacity and foresight he would have exacted other compensations and other pledges. He would have been seconded by the various Governments, and, in concert with them, he might, without violence, without overriding treaties, have relieved Russia from all restrictions placed upon her development in the East, and have obtained more precious advantages still, by compelling Prussia to sign a peace acceptable to France, compatible with the independence of Austria, and without danger for the legitimate influence of her Court in Europe. He had given all his confidence to his colleague at Berlin; he preferred to continue it and secure signal claims on his gratitude. From all this, in order to keep

within the scope of our inquiry, we propose for the time being to draw only one conclusion, which is that, without the moral and diplomatic support of Russia, Prussia, during the reign of a prince whose prudence was stronger than his ambition, would not have dared embark on three wars with the confidence of overcoming her enemies; that it is therefore to Russia that she owes all her successes. King William himself recognised this. The preliminaries of peace were signed at Versailles on February 27th, 1871, and on the same day he acquainted the Emperor Alexander with the fact in a letter which ended with these words:—"Prussia will never forget that it is to you she owes the fact that the war was not allowed to assume greater proportions. May God take this into account and bless you. Your ever grateful, WILLIAM."

We shall see if Prussia, whilst William was still reigning, was mindful of the services she had received.

## IV.

It was at this time that the long period of unity which had bound the Court of St. Petersburg to that of Berlin came to an end. Prussia had vanquished France; she had deprived her of two provinces and five milliards, and she imagined she

had crippled her resources for long and rendered her renovation distant and difficult. On the other hand she held sway over the whole of Germany, now freed from the domination of the Czars. She felt herself capable, if necessary, of restraining Russia. This double result was sufficient for the patriotism of Bismarck and his sovereign, and for the consolidation of the scheme they had at heart. Neither Chancellor nor master had any intention of exposing it by assisting the plans of the Russian Cabinet which the former had frequently encouraged, both during his embassy to St. Petersburg and at the time of General von Manteuffel's mission there. He had given expression to his whole thought, in his own way, on his return to Germany from France. "The preliminaries signed at Versailles," he said, "guarantee us fifty years' quietude." It was as much as to say that, Prussia being triumphant and satisfied, the peace of the world should not be disturbed, that Russia's assistance was no longer necessary, and that their friendship having become a burden it was time to put it to an end. This was the King's new programme, and he relied for its execution on his Chancellor's genius. Did the latter fulfil his task according to his master's wishes and to the advantage of his country? All we can say here is that the actual state of Europe is the result. History will pronounce

judgment on the work and workman. We will insist no further on this point. We should be anticipating events.

Yet what were the respective positions of Prussia and Russia at that time? The campaign in the Duchies had given the Hohenzollerns Holstein and Schleswig. Together with these provinces, the port of Kiel, the key to the Baltic, passed from the hands of a friendly or neutral Nation into those of an encroaching Power, faithful to her principle, that of all her ancestors: *Ubi bene, ibi patria*, who would be enabled in future to make a northern Bosphorus of the Sound and close the Atlantic to the Russian navy. The war against Austria had brought her other and more notable advantages; she had annexed kingdoms, duchies, and free-towns. Leaving a semblance of autonomy and independence to the other States of North Germany, she had forced a federative position on them, reserving the lion's share to herself. Under threat of her anger she had extorted treaties from the Southern States which placed them at her mercy. Then came the war with France, and Germany added Alsace and Lorraine to her possessions. To crown the work so well completed, the German Empire was restored the better to ensure the dominion of the descendants of Frederick the Great, and care was taken to impose a war indemnity on the con-

quered nation beneath the weight of which she might succumb. Such was Prussia's share. What advantages did Russia reap? Prince Gortchakoff's wish was gratified. Austria had been vanquished and humbled. He had had the satisfaction of drawing his pen through the treaty clause, submitted to in 1856, which purported to make the Black Sea neutral, but which in reality neutralised nothing, as he has stated himself. Vain and barren successes, which brought neither satisfaction nor guarantees. What was thought of them on the banks of the Neva? Whilst Prince Bismarck judged the moment opportune for closing the era of conquests, the Russians, on the contrary, considered the time had come for settling accounts and balancing up the profits. What did Prussia do? She held aloof with honeyed words and dilatory methods, in order to delay any fresh resolution or agreement. The fidelity of the Russian Government to the policy that had so long united it to Prussia, the communications publicly exchanged, the toasts drunk at the banquets had misled public opinion throughout the Muscovite Empire. Every one was persuaded that the Emperor Alexander would receive the price of the assistance he had rendered King William, and it was thought that Russia, with the aid of this grateful sovereign, would find legitimate compensation on the Danube and Bosphorus. The

public, in their enthusiasm, sincerely believed that the time had arrived to give effect to the testament of Peter the Great. This conviction was universal. The surprise therefore was painful and the discontent great, when it was felt that Russia would be victimised at Berlin just as France had been in 1866, and that the European equilibrium would remain upset to the exclusive benefit of Prussia. By the light of accomplished facts, Germany was thus beheld to rise up like a colossus with nothing to counterbalance her power, France and Austria being reduced for a long time to come to dressing their wounds. The illusions that had been so universally nursed were dispelled, and Prince Gortchakoff, sick at heart, had to admit to himself that his policy had been wanting in shrewdness. He collected himself again, this time to meditate on the faults committed and the means of averting the consequences.

The two parties were content to observe one another for some time after the restoration of peace. The one showed itself reserved, the other caressing and even obsequious. Their relations remained courteous, but were ever pervaded with intense mistrust. To dispel this feeling, now become general and even tangible throughout the whole Russian Empire, King William visited St. Petersburg in April, 1873, anxious to express to his august

nephew, in his own capital, the gratitude with which his heart was so profoundly penetrated, at least so he said. He remained there two weeks, and was brilliantly welcomed and fêted. But he returned to Berlin convinced that, this time, he had hoodwinked nobody, and that he had left behind him a feeling of resentment that was not to be overcome. He soon had a positive proof of it.

France had discharged her debt, had paid five milliards with an ease that upset all calculations, and disconcerted Prince Bismarck himself. The first attempts of the Republic to adjust the budget and restore the country's military strength had, indeed, yielded unhoped-for results. The Government at Berlin took alarm, and soon, in 1875, it was asking itself if the interest and security of the new Empire did not necessitate an obstacle being placed in the way of the revival of the hereditary enemy who, it was thought, had been crushed for years to come, by an appeal to arms. This was Count Moltke's opinion even more than the Chancellor's. "We cannot better our means of attack," the celebrated marshal is reported to have said, "and France is every day improving her system of defence. The decisive moment has arrived. Later on, war will cost the two nations a hundred thousand men more. To prevent its becoming a war of extermination we must have it at once. It is not only as a commander and a German that I say

this, it is also as a man and a Christian." This relentless warrior requires war to excess when he directs it. He showed as much at Sedan. He demands it with no less violence when peace has intervened and nations breathe again ;[1] he advises it as a believer, and in a feeling of solicitude for two countries whose blood he has caused to flow in torrents. A strange nature his, recalling that of the invaders, his ancestors. His contemporaries will not only owe past wars to him ; they will also be his debtors for future campaigns. We have mentioned the struggles Count Bismarck had to engage in with him at Nikolsburg and Versailles. However, it may be, the French Government was warned by the St. Petersburg Cabinet of the fresh peril threatening it. Russia, undeceived and anxious, was, on this occasion, firmly resolved not to permit another invasion of France. The Emperor Alexander himself so assured our Ambassador, General Le Flô.[2] Prussia brought face to face with this attitude of the Czar and his Government, relinquished her aggressive schemes. Whosoever has studied the history of these recent times will not be surprised at this result. William I.,

[1] In 1867, a year after the war against Austria, Count Moltke wished to direct Prussia's victorious arms against France, urging, with all the authority he had acquired, that a pretext should be found in the Luxemburg question.—*M. Henri des Houx chez M. de Bismarck.*

[2] See, in the newspapers of May, 1887, the account of this incident published by General Le Flô himself.

who was then approaching the last limits of old age, could not bring himself to undertake a war in the course of which he would have had to reckon with Russia's hostility. Any attempt to lead him into it would have been in vain. Prince Bismarck hastened to disavow the intentions attributed to Prussia. He did so haughtily and with emphasis, like a statesman whose secrets have been revealed, and in a manner calculated to wound the feelings of Prince Gortchakoff, who wished, he pretended, to assume the merit of having saved France from great danger. "I have never turned aside from Russia," he said; "it was she who repelled me and at times placed me in such a position that I was forced to modify my attitude to preserve my own dignity and that of Germany. This began in 1875, when Prince Gortchakoff gave me to understand how much his pride was nettled at the position I had attained to, in the political world."

It is certain that these regrettable sentiments, which statesmen should ever be careful to avoid, have played a lamentable part in the struggles which, in our time, have devastated Europe. But it must be recognised that Russia was not acting at that moment under the influence of any such feelings as these. She had other matters in view, other anxieties, caused by Prussia's aggrandisement, by the fixed intention of the Berlin Cabinet not to assist her to any compensation nor to give

her any pledges. Prince Bismarck, nevertheless, deeply felt the denunciation of which he had been made the object. His heart has never been open to the forgiveness of offences; genius itself has to pay its tribute to human weakness, we have seen this in the trial of Count Arnim, in that of Doctor Geffcken; but we have seen it more clearly still since he has been deposed from power, and one has been able to form an opinion on the subject by the vivacity and intemperance of his language, which has been such as to surprise even his adversaries and distress his most enthusiastic admirers. Did his irritation, in 1875, conform to the requirements of the object he had in view? Was it useful or opportune to break with Russia? It is impossible to say as yet. What is certain is that he showed he felt the wound inflicted on his vanity, and resolved to seek friendships elsewhere. The two Chancellors, repudiating the long past during which they had conspired together, thus ended in severing the ties that had united them, and henceforth we find them in a constant state of hostility. Prussia indeed, from the date of this incident, modified her policy, followed fresh combinations, and, after long efforts, succeeded in founding the Triple Alliance. The idea of this agreement took root in Prince Bismarck's mind in 1875. Its realization was difficult; Austria, under the weight of her

disasters, rebelled against her conqueror's smooth-tongued suggestions. The resistance Prince Bismarck met with at Vienna did not turn him from his purpose; he waited and found the means of overcoming it. Let us see how he proceeded.

## V.

In the course of this same year an insurrection broke out in Herzegovina. The movement soon spread to Bosnia and from there, later on, to Bulgaria. It has been pretended that the agitation was supported if not provoked by the secret service funds of the "reptiles"; nothing has proved this, and we only mention the rumour as an indication of the proclivities attributed to Prince Bismarck, who delighted, so it was believed, to create difficulties in the East for his colleague at St. Petersburg. The Turkish Government vainly endeavoured to restore order in its revolted provinces. Its troops not succeeding, it had recourse to a pitiless repression which raised a feeling of indignation among the populations and Cabinets of Europe. The Powers were roused. Long and laborious negotiations ensued, which brought Russia and England face to face, the one following ancient traditions which bade her defend her co-religionists, the other alarmed at

the dangers which again menaced the integrity of the Ottoman Empire.

Whilst they thus took up positions in presence of these fresh complications, Prussia kept in the background. In December, 1876, a Conference assembled at Constantinople. Its deliberations came to naught owing to the refusal of the Porte to permit the participation of the Powers in carrying out the measures destined to secure solid guarantees to the Christians. In March, 1877, a protocol, which remained a dead letter, was signed at London; the Turkish Government, not having been invited to participate in framing it, refused to accept its provisions. Yet matters were going from bad to worse: Montenegro and Servia had intervened in the struggle by allying themselves to the insurgents. In this state of affairs Russia took up arms. In the month of April her troops invaded Turkish territory. It is not our purpose to relate the struggle between the two Empires; we will merely recall that it ended in the treaty signed at San Stefano in the presence of the English fleet which had hastened to Constantinople and was at anchor in the Sea of Marmora. Prussia was more reserved; she indulged in no manifestation. Prince Bismarck knew that Great Britain had interests in the East identical with those of Turkey, so he willingly left it to her to give the first warnings which he

considered it needful Russia should receive. He knew above all, that nothing could be definitively accomplished, either in the Ottoman Empire or elsewhere, without the co-operation or adhesion of powerful Germany, especially if allied to England. In this double belief, he placed no obstacle in the way of either war or peace. He, of all Prime Ministers, was the one who maintained the most absolute reserve. Prussia, appealed to by the Porte, as it had appealed to the other Powers, when the struggle was at its height, to intervene as mediator, hastened to reject the Sultan's entreaties. England alone, showing day by day greater and greater solicitude for Turkey, ventured to offer her good services, thus assuming the part the German Chancellor had assigned her in his designs.

What were the terms of the treaty of San Stefano? It stipulated for new and precious advantages on behalf of all the Christian races of the Ottoman Empire: the independence of some and autonomy or solemn guarantees for the others. Besides a double rectification of frontiers, Russia obtained, in addition to a war indemnity, the right to superintend the execution of the concessions granted to her co-religionists. By these arrangements she recovered her freedon of action and influence which had been curtailed by the treaty of 1856, after the Crimean war. The English Government hastened to point out that these

advantages were inconsistent with the engagements which Russia had accepted at the Congress of Paris ; it declared therefore that it could only recognise the terms agreed to at San Stefano on the conditions that they were submitted, without a single exception, to the examination and approval of all the Powers concerned therein. The moment had arrived for Germany to side either with or against the Court of St. Petersburg, to renew the cordiality of their relations now seriously compromised, to strengthen afresh their respective interests, or to definitively adopt another course and form other agreements. Russia, with the assistance of King William and his able Chancellor, might have refused to appear before the Powers assembled in congress, and have claimed in her turn the integrity of the concessions she had obtained from the Porte at the cost of most grievous sacrifices and after a long and ruthless war, just as Prussia had done on two occasions thanks to the Emperor Alexander and Prince Gortchakoff. The German Empire on its side allied to that of the Czars would have had no occasion to fear the wrath of Great Britain ; but resolutions had been formed at Berlin, and they remained immutable. The King had forgotten the debt he owed his august nephew and which was still undischarged ; the Chancellor thought only of the recent attitude and behaviour of his colleague at St. Petersburg.

They preferred the Congress, being perfectly well aware of the claims England would make there. Russia had to submit and accept the proposal. Forsaken by Prussia, she could not set the hostility of the British Cabinet at defiance, in face of Austria laid low, and Italy disposed to submit to the impulse it would receive either from London or Berlin.

The Congress assembled under the presidency of Prince Bismarck. The Chancellor performed his task like an *honest broker*, as he has himself stated, giving each Power a share to the prejudice of Russia, and without forgetting France, in a design useful to the evolution he had given to his policy, and to which we will return later on. The stipulations of the treaty of San Stefano were altered as a whole, whilst others were added which upset the position guaranteed to the St. Petersburg Cabinet by the arrangements it had directly concluded with the Porte. To the superintendence it had reserved to itself over the execution of the concessions granted to the Christians, was especially substituted that of Europe. Commissions were formed which assumed these duties, thus dispossessing Russia of the position of guardian power she thought she had regained by her victory. The better to attain this result, the speedy evacuation of the Turkish provinces occupied by the armies of the Czar was insisted upon.

But the chief and unexpected clause, which nothing authorised nor anticipated, the one it is important to dwell upon because it has given rise to difficulties which will for a long time greatly trouble the political state of Europe, was a clause drawn up in a couple of lines and thus worded: "The provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina will be occupied and administered by Austria-Hungary." (Art. 25.) The form of this arrangement was nothing but an astute euphemism. In reality, the Sultan was divested by his friends of these provinces which had certainly taken up arms to win their autonomy but in nowise to change their master. Austria-Hungary, on the other hand, without having drawn the sword or made the slightest sacrifice, was placed in possession of territories destined to give a new prominence to her influence in the East. This scheme conceived by Prince Bismarck, ever fertile in unforeseen and ingenious expedients, was proposed to the Assembly by Lord Salisbury, one of the British Plenipotentiaries.

Nothing could show the understanding arrived at between the Cabinets of Berlin and London more clearly. No further illusion was now possible to the Emperor Alexander's representatives. It was, indeed, with the sole object of striking a blow at every interest Russia possessed, that the pretended protectors of Turkey conceived

the notion of inflicting this mutilation upon her for the benefit of Austria, the real competitor of the Russian Empire in the Balkan peninsula. This measure promised England a more powerful and efficacious co-operation against any fresh attempt on the part of the St. Petersburg Government in the East. It guaranteed to Germany the free passage of the Danube, her most direct route for her trade with the Black Sea and Asia. But Prince Bismarck had other views besides: he wished to render service to the Power vanquished at Sadowa, to cause her to forget her disasters by making up for them in part, and also to force her to ally herself closely to Germany. He was making the movement which would remove the foundation and support of his policy from St. Petersburg to Vienna. The stipulation which had emanated from him procured him the most certain and most rapid means of accomplishing this. He placed Austria-Hungary at his mercy. This Power, in possession of Bosnia, became the neighbour of Bulgaria; she was already in a similar situation as regards Servia and Montenegro: she was therefore in a position to exercise a preponderant influence over all the new States created out of the partition of the Ottoman Empire between the Danube and the Ægean Sea. She was henceforth the advance guard of Germany and England; but, by that

very fact, she agreed to constitute herself Russia's irreconcilable adversary. The state of affairs at the moment of writing, proves how well founded were the German Chancellor's previsions and with what sagacity he made use of England and Austria herself in the course of the negotiations over which he presided at Berlin.

Prince Bismarck, therefore, at the conclusion of the Congress, found himself absolute and independent master of the situation he had created. He could, as he willed, either become reconciled to Russia by means of concessions which his ingenuity would easily have discovered if necessary,[1] or he could enfeoff Austria-Hungary to his policy. One knows the course he adopted. To disguise nothing let us also mention that England, in her mistrust, had been careful, before proceeding to Berlin and in the intention of not returning empty-handed, to take the security that most suited her interests. She had extorted from the Porte the cession of Cyprus, which gave her on the one side access to Syria, and, on the other, to the entrance of the Suez Canal in the Mediterranean. The fact of this acquisition was dissembled in a treaty of defensive alliance which

[1] The St. Petersburg Cabinet gave him an opportunity. Count Schouvaloff invited him to conclude a formal treaty of alliance. He declined the proposal. At least, that is what he himself revealed to one of the numerous interviewers whom he received at Friedrichsruh.

deceived no one. Great Britain promised, and it was really an illusory obligation, to guarantee to Turkey her *Asiatic possessions, and, in order to place her in a position to ensure the necessary means for the execution of this engagement, the Sultan assigned this island to be occupied and administered by her.* It was in a similar way, as one has seen, that Austria acquired Herzegovina and Bosnia. Diplomacy possesses formulas which enable it to disguise, under the appearance of a temporary occupation, definitive and unjustifiable acts of spoliation. The British Government had not ventured on this negotiation without having taken the Cabinet at Berlin, who alone was aware of it, into its confidence. So soon as the matter began to be talked of, Prince Bismarck, not wishing it to be thought that he had been caught napping, caused his official organ, the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* to say that: "one is constrained to consent to this measure from the point of view of *progress and general civilisation.* We do not think we are mistaken in admitting that our Government was informed *beforehand* of the agreement, though without being asked to express an opinion on it." It was sufficient for the Prussian statesman to establish the fact that his vigilance had not been at fault. He considered it superfluous to acknowledge that he had authorised everything. It remained none the

less certain that the Plenipotentiaries of Queen Victoria and those of the Emperor William arrived at the Congress, after having come to a decision respecting the weighty problems it was their mission to solve. Russia had been condemned before she had been heard.

The relentless German Chancellor, who had not ceased to be, nor ever will cease to be, the resolute and vehement lordling of his early years, took a signal revenge for the suspicious position in which the temerity of the St. Petersburg Cabinet had placed him in 1875. He has vanquished Russia without fighting her, has humiliated Prince Gortchakoff before an European areopagus, has tasted the pleasure of the gods, ever so dear to his ardent and impassioned soul; sweet and supreme satisfaction which he has constantly sought for during his long and glorious career. But did he on this occasion, render good service to his King and country? One is justified in expressing doubt on the subject in the presence of the incessant efforts attempted by the new Emperor, on the very morrow of his accession, to appease Russia and arrange a reconciliation between the two Courts, so nearly related. Besides, it does not appear to be the general opinion in Germany that he did. Under the government, we might say the reign, of Prince Bismarck, if there were still law-courts at Berlin, there were no longer any judges

in a certain sense. Whoever dared blame his foreign policy risked being prosecuted for offences against his person or for the crime of high treason. Writers who attempted it found themselves in prison and sometimes confined in a fortress. He succeeded, thus, in inculcating prudence, if not absolute silence. Since his fall, tongues and pens have been more free ; his underlings on the press have themselves forsaken him, and one knows how haughtily he has loaded them with his contempt. A pamphlet which appeared at Leipsic expressed the feelings of the malcontents in no measured terms.[1] "Prince Bismarck," it says, "tries in vain to impose on the public ; . . . he is the author of an irremediable rupture between Russia and Germany. . . . It was Russia that made Prussia's greatness. . . . In 1870, whilst under arms on the Vistula, she protected the frontier of the Rhine. . . . By the treaty of San Stefano, Russia flattered herself she would reap the advantages which a sanguinary and successful war gave her the right to claim : the Berlin treaty annulled its provisions almost entirely. . . . If, at the time of the Congress, Gortchakoff asked but little, if he resigned himself to seeing Austria-Hungary, Russia's adversary, take the leading

[1] It bears the title "How the Duke of Lauenburg (Prince Bismarck) brought about the understanding between the Russian Empire and the French Republic."

position in the Balkan Peninsula, it was because he found himself contending against a coalition whilst the *only powerful friend* upon whom he thought he could rely kept out of the way. . . . She (Russia) is peaceful, but she commands our respect. . . . She knows that in the hour of danger she can rely on a friendly power whose alliance has no need to be ratified by a written convention. . . . Russia, moreover, will never again play the part she did in 1870; she will not assist at the dismemberment of France with folded arms. . . ." That is what is thought and written to-day in Germany. We have said the same. Was this publication, which created considerable stir in public opinion and in the press, inspired? Nothing goes to prove it; but its circulation was not prohibited, and most of the newspapers gave long extracts from it. This twofold circumstance displays a symptom that one may certainly make note of by the way.

These same truths that are now being so lavishly bestowed, from the banks of the Spree, on the restorer of the German Empire in retirement at his country seat, the Russian press, interpreting the national feeling, had imparted to him during the last years of his government. He had their exactitude disputed by the powerful organs of publicity in his pay. He has taken advantage of every opportunity to deny or correct

them himself, to show that he had on every occasion been Russia's best friend, and notably at the Berlin Congress. He has averred everything; he has proved nothing. The established facts did not allow of his doing so. Indeed, with the exception of Montenegro, who, in spite of everything, has remained faithful to the Czars her benefactors, the provinces watered by the Danube — two of which have been raised into independent kingdoms, whilst the third has been made an autonomous principality — these provinces, we can say, which owed everything for years to the blood of Russian armies, shed in abundance to release them from bondage, were already, through the resistless result of the resolutions formed at the Berlin Congress, the one, Servia, under the yoke of Austria, and the other, Roumania, manifestly rebellious to all connection with the St. Petersburg Cabinet: as for the third, Bulgaria, which has been loaded with benefits of every description, she employs, or rather her rulers do not cease to employ, every means to avoid recognising them. And thus it is that Russia, their emancipator, is to-day robbed of all influence in those countries to the advantage of Austria, or, as would be more correct to say, of Germany. If things are thus — and we venture to think nobody will contradict us — is Prince Bismarck entitled to claim the benefit of his watchfulness over the interests of the Russian

Empire? Is this not adding mockery to hostility? But a statesman of his stamp, who has attained the zenith of power, may give utterance to rash words with impunity; public credulity listens to them unmoved, when it does not applaud them.

## VI.

There is one acknowledgment due to Prince Bismarck which costs us nothing to render him. The work formed by his hands established with mathematical precision, we may say, the respective positions of the contracting parties. It was thus that matters were judged at St. Petersburg and elsewhere. It was thus that he understood them himself. Each power knew who were and who might eventually become its friends or adversaries, as well as the line of action to be followed henceforth. By a strange freak of fate, Russia after her victories, the same as France after her defeats, had to fortify herself in her isolation, and, like the conquered nation, provide for her security by reorganising her military forces, by giving them all the development they were capable of. Her confidence having been destroyed, she hastened to guard her frontiers against surprise by covering them with strong contingents of troops drawn from the armies then evacuating Turkey. It was sought to show,

especially at Vienna, that this proceeding was far from being a peaceful demonstration. One can recall the recriminations of the Austrian press, and, if we mention them, it is because they show the origin of the armaments which became, from that time, the general law of all European States. Germany herself took the first step under the pretext that her neighbours on the north and west of the Empire were arming beyond measure.

Whilst the military authorities were bestirring themselves, the Chancellor was not dozing. He was hastening to put his projects of alliance into execution. At the time when he made an understanding between the Russian Empire and the French Republic inevitable, he had, as we have said, thought of and prepared for this contingency. Skilful and far-seeing as he was, he had irremissibly parted Austria and Russia, and placed the first-named of these Powers in the urgent necessity of uniting herself to Germany and in a measure belonging to her. He demanded at Vienna the price of the acquisitions that was his due, and offered the Austro-Hungarian Government to arrange a defensive alliance. The Vienna Cabinet was not in a position to decline. It is probable also that it welcomed the offer in order to shield itself behind Germany from the wrath of Russia. The clauses of this

agreement were, however, under discussion for a long time. At Berlin, they required an understanding binding the parties for every contingency, both as regards Russia and France. Any conflict between Germany or Austria and one or the other of these two Powers was to be considered as creating the *casus fœderis*. We had in our mind, the Vienna Cabinet replied, a state of affairs which bound us to protect ourselves against an aggression on the part of Russia. Public opinion throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire would understand, as would all the Cabinets of Europe, that we were joining Germany with this object, and no one would consider it more than a purely defensive measure. The treaty would, in that case have every appearance of a pacific arrangement. On the other hand, there is nothing to place us at variance with France; we have no plausible reason for adopting a distrustful attitude towards her; by pointing her out, we should be rendering ourselves guilty of an unjustifiable act of ill-will, if not of hostility. Prince Bismarck went to Vienna, intervening in person to overcome the resistance opposed to him. Count Andrassy maintained his point of view, and offered to resign. The German Chancellor had to be satisfied with making the treaty dated October 7, 1879.[1]

[1] See a recent article in the German Review, *Nord und Süd.*

What does it covenant? The name of France is not mentioned. The first clause says that, if one of the two Empires is attacked by Russia, they will owe reciprocally to each other the assistance of the whole of their military forces. If it is attacked by some other Power (clause 2), the other contracting party undertakes to observe a friendly neutrality. If the *attacking* Power were supported by Russia (clause 3), the obligation to render reciprocal assistance, dealt with in the first clause, would immediately come into force. The treaty as it is seen, is explicitly conceived and framed against Russia; she is named in it twice, whilst France is never mentioned. Russia is provided against; and the two Empires of Germany and Austria are to take up arms and fight her, whether she becomes the aggressor or whether she assists in no matter what degree the efforts of another Power. Nothing indicates this Power; it was unnecessary to do so. But this voluntary omission, undoubtedly insisted on by the Vienna Cabinet, is none the less worthy of remark. What is even more so, what it is important to bear in mind, is the distinction drawn between the contingency of war with Russia and that of the outbreak of hostilities with France. In the first, the two allies owe each other reciprocal and absolute assistance, no matter which may be attacked. In the second, the contracting party who is not directly engaged

in the struggle at the outbreak, would not have to join in it so long as Russia abstained from doing so. Its sole duty would consist in adopting and maintaining a friendly attitude. Does this mean that if a fresh struggle arose between France and Germany, we might reckon on Austria's neutrality? Such is not our feeling. The spirit and bearing of conventional clauses, no matter what their terms, become modified by circumstances, and no one is ignorant of the fact that, in our times, they are susceptible of every interpretation. The faith of treaties, that highly respectable principle of the soundness of international relations, of the security of nations and general peace, has received some very serious onslaughts since might dispossessed right, and the Government that would now make it the invariable rule of its conduct and decisions would find itself exposed to most terrible disappointments. [1]

[1] The preamble of the Austro-German treaty says: "Considering that the two monarchs will be able, by a firm alliance of the two Empires similar to *that which existed before*, to accomplish this undertaking" (that of watching over the security of their States). Did this firm alliance, which existed before, deter Prussia from declaring war against Austria without cause and without provocation, and solely to gratify her cupidity? "The two Sovereigns," the preamble adds, "promising solemnly never to give the slightest aggressive character to their purely defensive agreement, have resolved to conclude a treaty of peace and reciprocal protection." Whilst Count Bismarck was Prime Minister, Prussia violated the treaty of 1852 which guaranteed the integrity of the Danish dominions; the treaty of 1856, by encouraging (he has admitted it)

The treaty signed at Vienna, in 1879, remained secret in this sense, that, whilst its object was known, its purport and conditions were ignored. On February 4th, 1888, it is suddenly made public. It had been renewed in 1883 and 1887; it had received the adhesion of Italy. But the text revealed is the early one, drawn up by Prince Bismarck and Count Andrassy, the only one we know at present, without any mention of the signatures exchanged since its date either with the Cabinet of Vienna or that of Rome. What was the necessity for this? What was the German Chancellor's motive? Only one explanation has been forthcoming. It is this: At the opening of the session of the Reichstag he had introduced a bill providing for a supplementary credit of 280 million marks for the military department. Public opinion and the Federal Assembly alike received

Russia in ignoring the clause which made the Black Sea neutral; the Prusso-Italian treaty of 1866, by concluding peace with Austria at Nikolsburg without the participation and in spite of the protests of his ally; the treaty of Prague of the same year, by imposing on the States of Southern Germany, to which he had promised a *free and independent* position, by imposing on them, we say, conventions which placed all their military forces, without distinction, under the direct and absolute command of the King. Who henceforth would guarantee to Europe that Prussia would abstain from forcing Austria, if it were her interest to do so and she judged the moment opportune, to change their *peaceful* understanding into an *offensive* alliance? After having witnessed the violence used, the engagements ignored, might we not, on the contrary, say with Hamlet: "*Words! Words! Words!*" if such things, thus written, did not command respect, even when they inspire mistrust?

this demand with feelings of surprise and mistrust. The German army, it was said, is the most powerful of all European armies, as much by numbers and armament as by organisation; it must, therefore, be war that is foreseen, and which will be brought on at an early date! The Chancellor would not have been believed if, after our disasters, he had again evoked the spectre of the hereditary enemy. He decided to show the country and its representatives that what he wished for was peace and not war, and he placed the treaty concluded with Austria before them. But to ensure peace, he intended to put Germany in such a position that she would not have to fear war, and to neglect nothing, should it occur, to render it disastrous to her adversaries. A few days afterwards, February 6th, the bill came on for discussion, and he spoke with the view of unfolding this double theme. He was courteous towards the Czar: "I have been able to convince myself," he said at the outset, "that the Emperor Alexander has no bellicose feeling towards us, no intention of attacking us, nor any leaning towards aggresive wars in general. I have no faith in the press. I rely on, and believe in, the Czar's word. . . . . Prussia owes a debt of gratitude to Russia since 1813. A great deal was made of this during the reign of the Emperor Nicholas, and I may say that the debt was wiped out at

Olmütz; but we have continued our friendship to Russia and we are grateful to her for her attitude in 1866 and 1870. On this last occasion, we were again able to render her a service by procuring for her, through our victories, a free hand in the Black Sea. . . . . We endeavour to respect the rights which Russia obtains by treaties. . . . . and if she asks us to support her applications to the Sultan to bring the Bulgarians to the position arranged by the understanding of the Powers, I should not hesitate to do so. . . . ." Parallel to this thesis, and entangling the two together, the Chancellor dwelt at length on that of peace: ". . . .We desire its continuance," he declared. "We wish to preserve it with all our neighbours, especially with Russia. . . . . We are not obtruding ourselves; we are merely seeking to renew the former friendly relations. . . . . If war breaks out, the powder will have to be fired by others; we shall not set it alight. . . . ." But, according to him, there is an imperious necessity which Germany cannot shirk; she must be as strong as her interest demands and her power admits of, ever ready and prepared to defend the Empire on all sides at the same moment. "The bill," he added, "brings us a considerable increase of trained troops; it strengthens the league of peace the same as if a fourth Power, with 700,000 men, had joined it. Public opinion will become

easy when it considers that, if we are simultaneously attacked on two sides, we shall be able to march a million men to each frontier whilst keeping a third million in reserve. . . . . If we have no need of them, so much the better. We shall do our best that this may be the case. We Germans," he said, in conclusion, "fear God, but nothing else in the world, and this fear of the Almighty causes us to *love* and *cultivate* peace. Whosoever violates it will be able to convince himself that the whole German nation is animated by that same fondness for the fatherland as, in 1813, called the entire population of diminished and enfeebled Prussia to arms; and he who attacks her will find her united and armed, and will see that every warrior carries in his heart the firm belief that God is with us." Proud and noble words, with a Christian and patriotic accent that it is impossible not to recognise, but which nevertheless cause great surprise when one remembers that the statesman who uttered them desired and brought about three wars in six years, that he set Europe ablaze from the Baltic to the Danube and from the Danube to the Loire: the language of a neophyte, will be the verdict of history, of a neophyte converted to God and peace after having gathered a rich harvest of success and glory on the battlefield.

The Chancellor's speech so impressed the As-

sembly that it put an end to the discussion; the bill was carried by acclamation. He had triumphed over the hesitation of parliament and obtained the grants asked for by the Minister of War. Was this the sole object he had in view? Did he not also aim at endeavouring to improve his relations with Russia, and at the same time warn his allies that there were still contingencies which would enable him to become reconciled with the Northern Empire, if they, on their part, did not make the sacrifices necessitated by common interest as Germany was doing? With such a fertile mind, everything is possible. It is to be remarked further that Italy's most serious efforts to improve the condition of her military power date from this time, as does also the obtrusion of the German Great General Staff in the important measures adopted at Rome.

But if the German Chancellor's declarations, pacific and arrogant in turn, were heard and understood in Italy, and even in Austria, what was thought of them, what value was set on them at St. Petersburg? Did they move public opinion, did they change the attitude of the Russian Cabinet? Not in the slightest degree. The press, in a certain measure under the control of the administrative authority, persisted in the judgment it had passed on the conduct of the former and ungrateful ally at the Berlin Congress. The Czar's

Government did not change its programme in the least. Clothing itself in its dignity, it noiselessly and unostentatiously increased its efforts to place its frontiers in a state of defence and improve its military appliances. The publication of the treaty of alliance, the trouble Prince Bismarck gave himself to bring out its pacific character, did not modify the state of affairs, nor alter the position taken up by each of the interested Powers in the least.

## VII.

We have mentioned under what circumstances and by the force of what necessities the Vienna Cabinet came to sign the treaty of alliance. Repulsed, as one knows, by Russia, who could not forget her ingratitude, vanquished by Prussia, shorn of the high position she had so long occupied in Germany, Austria was dispossessed of her sphere of action in the West. She was therefore necessarily obliged to direct her policy and her efforts to the East of her dominions in order to strengthen and extend her influence over the Slavs of her Empire and the adjacent countries. Prince Bismarck furnished her the means of doing so by inviting her to occupy two provinces of the Turkish Empire. She could not decline a proposal which, in a certain measure,

was calculated to repair her recent disasters. The difficulties of her position, therefore, explain and justify, if one will, both her behaviour and the agreement she entered into with Germany. But Prince Bismarck had no intention of being satisfied with her co-operation only; he wished also to ensure that of a Power whose every interest made her the foe of Austria and ally of France. We have named Italy.

Events of immense import had seriously troubled the harmony of four of the greatest Powers of the Continent, and had imposed on them the obligation of keeping watch over their security. The war had not only mutilated France; it had left her defenceless. The first duty of her Government was to reorganise her army, and to place it on a firm footing in order to avert fresh perils. Russia, though issuing victorious from the war against Turkey, abandoned by her friends of Berlin, was herself obliged to provide for her own defence. We have exposed the difficulties of Austria, placed between the animosity of the St. Petersburg Cabinet and the exactions of the Government of the German Empire. Germany, on her side, meant to preserve the preponderating position she had conquered after two great wars from all attack, and to fortify its stability at any cost. These Powers had all equally, though in diverse degrees, an important interest in protecting them-

selves against any contingencies for which the new balance of power in Europe did not offer them sufficient guarantees. Was Italy troubled by similar necessities? Was her unity threatened? Had she even any adversaries who might be nursing the design of imperilling her independence, of refusing her the legitimate share of influence she had henceforth the right to claim in the councils of the Powers? One can understand Prince Bismarck's policy; it is simple and clear; one can see its idea and aim. One can also conceive and easily interpret the policy of the Vienna Cabinet. But one cannot conceive, and one seeks in vain to discover the motives or considerations that sufficed to determine Italy to abandon her liberty of action. Yet she has allied herself to Germany and Austria, who are themselves united against France and Russia. Let us examine under what circumstances she came to take so serious a step.

We have seen in the course of the foregoing remarks that gratitude weighs heavily on the consciences of nations as well as of Governments.[1] The recollection of the services rendered by France worried the Italians. The prestige of the victories gained over the Austrians by the united armies

[1] One remembers Prince Schwarzenberg's prophetic words. Rebellious Hungary had been subdued, thanks to Russia's armed assistance: "Austria," said he, "will astound the world by her ingratitude."

was ours. There was, on this account, throughout the peninsula, a feeling of humiliation which wounded the national pride. This state of mind was intensified by other causes. It was not sufficient for the Italians to have formed a united kingdom; they had a final ambition, that of making Rome their capital. France, until the fall of the Empire, placed an obstacle in their way, and so yesterday's ally became the adversary of the morrow. The French press dwelt only the more strongly and in less measured terms on the debt incurred by Italy, and, without consideration for the vanity of a young and susceptible nation, spared it neither remonstrances nor warnings. Then came the war of 1866, and the Italians, wounded in their pride by the defeat of Custozza, had, besides, to resign themselves, after barren negotiations, to receive Venetia from the hands of France, to whom Austria had ceded it before the outbreak of hostilities. Under the influence of these various incidents, Italy came to forget her most precious interests and her true friends. Taking advantage of our reverses, she seized upon Rome, and, convinced that she owed this to the victories of the German armies, she was the originator, in 1870, of the league of neutrals, which isolated France in Europe throughout the whole war. She had thus rid herself of the burden of her gratitude and misplaced her sympathies. One

then beheld political men, who had hitherto known only the road to Paris, journeying to Berlin.

It was not long before other plans were formed. It was considered that Italy, having reached the rank of Great Power, ought to support all the burden of her position and partake of all its ambitions. To acquit herself of her new duties, she was bound to place her military power on a firmer footing, to possess a strong naval armament which would give her the standing and enable her to exercise the power which were her right in the Mediterranean. She was to extend her efforts abroad, to protect her commerce and navigation, to secure for them fresh openings, and to found colonies. Venice, Genoa, Pisa, Florence had, in turn, possessed the monopoly of trading with the ports of the Levant; they had established houses there and ruled as sovereigns. This glorious past, justly recalled, opened unexpected horizons to the minds of the people. They wished to do great things like all nations awaking from a long sleep, the result of years of servitude.

Such were the desires expressed by public opinion and the feelings of the Italian Government when the Congress assembled at Berlin. Prince Bismarck, on opening the proceedings, was not only imbued with the fixed intention of altering the treaty of San Stefano, and endowing Austria, his necessary ally, with two provinces;

he also wished to win over Italy and separate her for ever from France by offering her Tunis. Herr von Bülow, the Foreign Minister at that period, was instructed to sound Count Corti, the principal Italian plenipotentiary. This step did not meet with the success anticipated. The representative from Rome, after taking the instructions of his Government, declined to consider the suggestion. "You must be very anxious to embroil us with France," he said to the Chancellor's mouthpiece on closing the interview. Cairoli, that sagacious and indomitable patriot, was then President of the Council. It was repugnant to all his past life to serve the views of Germany, against whom he had always so nobly contended. He saw the snare and avoided it.[1] This repulse was not sufficient to rebuff such a strong will as Prince Bismarck's. And in fact he was not disheartened. Receiving the cold shoulder from Italy, he turned to France. What did he tell our plenipotentiaries? We cannot say, but it is known that our resolution to occupy the regency met with the Chancellor's

[1] During the course of the preliminary negotiations which preceded the meeting of the Congress at Berlin, Baron Haymerle, representing the Vienna Cabinet at Rome, was instructed to propose to Cairoli that they should concert together with the view to enable Italy and Austria to mutually secure certain advantages, and he made an allusion to Tunis. "Italy," he was told in reply, "will enter the Congress with free hands, intending to retire from it with them clean." This diplomatic incident clearly proves that an understanding already existed between Vienna and Berlin, and that they sought the adhesion of Italy to the detriment of France.

adhesion and encouragement. The treaty signed at the Bardo raised the liveliest irritation throughout Italy. Had we seized on a portion of Italian territory we could not have been the object of harsher recriminations. No account was taken of a single one of the considerations which made it our duty to prevent all contiguity with a European Power on our Algerian frontiers, which would have been a source of perpetual conflicts. Instigated by the Italian colony in Tunis, which was deceived in its hopes and injured in its interests, this agitation was kept up and envenomed by the adversaries of the Cabinet. Cairoli had to retire from office, and Depretis was entrusted with the duty of forming a new Ministry. The circumstances which had brought about the fall of the former Cabinet, and the accession of the new one, were created by Prince Bismarck, and procured him the opportunity and means of accomplishing the object he had been aiming at. Italy acceded to the treaty of Vienna in 1882. The triple alliance was accomplished. What the Chancellor had been unable to obtain by exciting Italian covetousness, he secured by rousing its jealousy. This was not accomplished, however, without raising a few but energetic protests. Some officers broke their swords; voices were raised in the midst of Parliament to denounce to the country an agreement so contrary to its interests, Signor

Crispi's voice was especially heard, the pleasures of office not having then been tasted by him.

If Italy's accession to the treaty of alliance did not constitute an act of hostility it was nevertheless an act inspired by mistrust and manifestly directed against France. Depretis did not disguise this, but, desirous of palliating its full scope, he adopted and maintained a reserved and conciliatory attitude. He even showed some eagerness to loudly repudiate all thought of ill-will and especially of aggression. During his long ministry he was able to give the relations between the two countries a character of constant courtesy. Meanwhile his adversaries were moving. Signor Crispi was at their head, and attracted notice by his violent accusations. At Parma, in 1884, he declared that "Italy would have no repose until she had avenged the murder of Oberdank." In Parliament he remained the implacable enemy of the new policy, the first initiators of which had been moreover the men of the Right, against whom he had always contended. In the course of a memorable sitting he launched this most offensive insult against the head of the Government: "You have made yourself Germany's gendarme!" he said. In concert with his friends, desirous like himself of attaining to power, he prepared a pamphlet, a kind of appeal to the country or indictment against the Ministry. Depretis was

moved, and he averted the danger by offering Signor Crispi the portfolio for Home Affairs. This is how the last President of the Council has himself related this incident: "When in March, 1887," said he to the Chamber, "Depretis invited me to join his Ministry, I demanded to read the treaty of 1882 which had just been renewed, so as to set my conscience at rest. Having come to the conclusion that it was defensive and not offensive, I was fully satisfied and I accepted." His conversion, as one sees, was in a measure instantaneous. This stubborn Irredentist, this uncompromising patriot considered the treaty of alliance one day an accursed piece of work; on the morrow he was fully *satisfied* with it. Power has seductions against which the strongest minds are not always proof. Signor Crispi, once a member of the Cabinet, secured the very first day that authority which an audacious and enterprising spirit is entitled to. The health of Depretis was grievously shattered; he soon succumbed. Signor Crispi rallied to his policy, besides being an influential orator having the ear of the Chamber, was already marked out for forming a new Ministry. The King entrusted him with the task.

Brought up in the Mazzini and Garibaldi school, the new President of the Council had long been one of its most constant adherents. Ever an ardent and faithful disciple, he had rejoined the

one in London and followed the other to Sicily. Like them, he had always had a taste for temerity, and he does not seem to have lost it. On every occasion he has boldly tackled the difficulties he has encountered in his path. Placed suddenly at the head of the Government of his country, after a long life passed in opposition, with sentiments and antecedents which had not prepared him for his new mission, he found himself confronted by a situation beset by, to him, contradictory exigencies. Yet he had to come to a decision, to fix a policy. This obstinate republican, this irreconcilable enemy of the former rulers of Italy, breaking with his past, without a care for the opinion of his brothers in arms, hoists the flag of the Triple Alliance, relying on the dominant feeling in Italy, every day more hostile to France and more sympathetic to Germany. Power was only to be held at this price, and he wished to keep it. With equal boldness he adapted his conduct and acts to his resolve. Anxious to make himself agreeable at Berlin, he assumed a haughty demeanour towards France. The chief aim of Depretis, in terminating the treaty of commerce, was to alter its terms. In accordance with the assurances he had given, he appointed negotiators for that purpose. They arrived at Paris, and the conferences had commenced when Signor Crispi, having succeeded to the Presidency of the Council

in August, took in September the road to Friedrichsruh, which not one of his predecessors had ever passed along or known, and from the very home of the German Chancellor he instructed the Italian commissioners to stop the negotiations and return to Rome. He thus paid for the favour he was soliciting before even having received it. What was it he required? He wished to enter personally into the great man's confidence, to raise himself to the height of Count Kalnoky, who had preceded him a few days before, and to share with him the privilege of those secret and at the same time invariably noised abroad conversations; to ape, as some one has said, a Chancellor; to take a front rank among statesmen and thereby firmly establish his position in Italy. He received a welcome which responded to his hopes. The semi-official press of Berlin enthusiastically greeted the great patriot, the true successor of Cavour. He returned to Rome in triumph, his organs in the press re-echoing the praises of the Berlin newspapers, and stating that, thanks to him, Italy had conquered for all time the position Russia had deserted in the Councils of the Empires. National pride was immensely flattered; and Signor Crispi was able, with head erect, to ascend to the Capitol.

He had certainly not left Friedrichsruh without entering into some engagements. He had to

give pledges as a guarantee of good faith. He gave them. At the earnest request of the French Government, the treaty of commerce which expired December 31st, 1887, was prolonged for two months.[1] France, in its desire to avert a solution that would be equally regrettable for the two interested countries, sought to turn this last and final delay to account; it therefore despatched M. Teisserenc de Bort to Rome, entrusting him with the mission of renewing negotiations. Our commissioner endeavoured in vain to accomplish his task. His efforts encountered an irrevocable decision, and he was, in a measure, politely dismissed. Signor Crispi has pretended that the attitude of the Italian Government in this affair was forced upon it, by the conviction that France was dissembling her intention of not renewing the treaty. Upon what information was this conviction founded? It has never been known, and the incident we have just related proves the contrary. We can mention another none the less convincing. On December 15th, 1886, the very day on which the treaty was terminated by Italy, the French Senate, in agreement with the Government, rejected a motion introduced by one of its members which sought the same result. Signor

[1] France had asked for an extension of six months with an evidently conciliatory intention. Signor Crispi refused. (See, in the Green Book for commercial affairs, the despatches addressed to General Menabrea, Nos. 52 and 54.)

Crispi has also alleged that the general tariff, soon followed by a differential one, and both promulgated at Rome, were the one and the other of a purely defensive character. Yet what was their consequence? They notably closed the Italian markets to our goods. Which of the two Governments was the first to adopt such deplorably rigorous measures? "The *differential* tariff," said Signor Crispi in the Chamber, "was established by us, *only* in answer to a similar tariff *previously* put into force by France against Italian produce." The President of the Italian Council forgets the general tariff, the dispositions of which were *only* made more unbearable by the differential one. At what date was the first of these two tariffs inserted in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, at Rome? In July, 1887, six months before the expiration of the treaty. At what date did our Chambers, on their side, vote a *general* tariff? Was it *before* this, as Signor Crispi would have it believed by means of a play upon words? It was on December 15th of the same year, nearly six months after the publication of the Italian general tariff and *only* fifteen days before the stipulated expiration of the commercial treaty. The initiative of prohibitive measures was therefore adopted at Rome long in advance. The responsibility of the strange position in which two nations, equally interested in continuing their

peaceful transactions, find themselves, devolves exclusively on the Italian Government.

Has Signor Crispi manifested a more conciliatory disposition on other occasions? Has he shown a desire to maintain political relations with France on the footing of a real and sincere friendship? The semi-official press of Rome and Turin has credited the Government of the Republic with the most underhand schemes. It has stated, and still repeats, that we are meditating a descent now on Tripoli, now on Spezzia itself; it has pretended that we were making preparations in Tunis to seize upon Sicily. It never ceases to attribute to us what it considers a still blacker design: we are menacing, it asserts, Italian unity and independence by encouraging the illusions of the Holy See, whose temporal power France seeks to restore.[1] One does not refute such inanities. But we may be permitted to state that they are unceasingly repeated in Italy, and that public feeling is becoming more and more affected by them. Has Signor Crispi taken the trouble to deny these rumours, to point out their absurdity? Is it not a statesman's duty to set public opinion right when it has been misled, and to acknow-

[1] In connection with the recent utterances of Cardinal Lavigerie a ministerial journal, the *Capitan Fracassa*, published an article pretending to show that the understanding between the French Republic and the Papacy was an accomplished fact, and that the time for dealing with it by the Italian Government had arrived.

ledge the loyal intentions of a neighbouring country which has been so often and so obstinately accused by semi-official organs of premeditating acts of violence? What would he think, if every morning and every night our most respectable journals were to state that a descent upon Nice or the coasts of Corsica was in course of preparation at Spezzia; that Italy was intriguing with different parties in France for the overthrow of the Republic, without the French Government taking the slightest step to put an end to such false allegations? Would he suffer Italy's political probity to be thus daily suspected and called into question? Has he the consideration for the probity of France which sound international traditions would inspire? He has not only, by his inaction, encouraged his most zealous supporters in Italy to rouse national susceptibilities in both countries, he has also himself contributed to this end, by his acrimonious language and his overbearing attitude on every occasion when, in the ordinary course of events, some misunderstanding has arisen between Paris and Rome. We all remember the incident of Massowah to give only one example. France ventured to make some observations in the interest of some Greek merchants residing in the island under the protection of our Consul, and whose trade had been saddled with duties they had never paid.

It was a matter of no importance, and could give rise to no serious disagreement. It was easy to settle it rapidly and quietly; all that was necessary was to exchange a few friendly explanations. Signor Crispi chose to see in the attitude of the Government of the Republic an attack on the sovereignty of Italy. He addressed communications to all the Cabinets of Europe couched in language that surprised the Ministries, accustomed to less acrimony and greater circumspection, far more than the subject that had given rise to it. According to him, "France would like to make believe that the peaceful progress of the Italian nation showed a diminution of her power and authority." A phrase which has no sense, or else means that France, jealous of Italy's influence and conquests, was wickedly endeavouring to place obstacles in her way. Our intervention in favour of the subjects of the King of Greece, which was justified from the point of view of international right, was not sufficiently important to provoke such a noisy manifestation. But Signor Crispi wished to please Berlin and flatter the national pride of the Italians. He was, moreover, encouraged by Prince Bismarck, who sought every day to envenom the relations between France and Italy more and more.[1] The

[1] In a report of the Italian Ambassador to Germany, published in the Green Book, it is stated that: "In accordance with Prince

Paris Cabinet wisely refrained from retaliating, leaving the Italian Minister the full benefit of his diplomatic amenities, and so the affair ended.

What was Signor Crispi's idea when he entered on this course, what was his object? As a deep and practical thinker, did he foresee that by falling asleep in an expensive peace, Italy was risking a terrible awakening? that a day would come when her strength would no longer be equal to her sacrifices? Persuaded of this did he wish, as has been pretended, to hasten events, and, by means of some far-fetched complication, to stir up a war which would have brought matters to a head and just when he wished? There is nothing to justify such a conjecture. The statesman who would set one half of Europe against the other, both formidably armed, without being imperiously constrained to do so for the salvation of his own country, would be a criminal whom the nations would have a right to hold up to the execration of present and future generations. Such is certainly, we have no doubt, Signor Crispi's own feeling. If it be so, why does he not imitate his predecessor? Depretis advised his Sovereign to join the alliance of the Emperors of

Bismarck's orders, Count Münster has received instructions, in the event of M. Goblet speaking to him of the incident of Massowah, to let him understand that it would be prudent, on his part, not to embitter matters, for if Italy found herself beset by serious complications, she would not be left in an isolated position."

Austria and Germany, but he never ceased to act most correctly in his intercourse with the French Government. He terminated the treaty of commerce, but with the sole idea of forcing France to revise it. Signor Crispi has pursued the same policy, but with this difference. With Depretis there was a show of being conciliatory without being friendly; his successor has been combative when not aggressive. Let us hasten, however, to make this admission: Signor Crispi has latterly seemed to wish to attenuate the rigour of his ways. In his conversations, as in his more recent speeches, one meets with none of those allusions he ventured to make on other occasions. He loves France, he said at Naples; "France, that sympathetic smile of modern civilisation," he added at Florence. To what causes can we attribute this return to less hostile, if not more cordial language?[1] Is it to the financial and economic embarrassments which are disturbing the country and tormenting the Government, or has Signor Crispi become convinced that the Sovereigns allied to Italy, sincerely desire to preserve the blessings of peace to their subjects, and that it would be useless and even dangerous to tempt fortune at this time? Has not Prince Bismarck's retirement also had a salutary effect on

[1] It is, however, to be observed that the organs of the Italian press which support him, have in nowise, up to the present, lessened either the warmth or the malignity of their polemics.

the Italian Premier's state of mind? All these circumstances have, perhaps, contributed to an appeasement which will be lasting, if loyally desired at Rome, notwithstanding the engagements into which Italy has entered.

## VIII.

What are these engagements, what advantage are they likely to yield, what are their obligations and their perils? By what arguments, in short, has Italy's participation in the Triple Alliance been justified? We know only one treaty or rather one text, as we have said; the one Germany signed with Austria in 1879. Did Italy simply accede to it, or have fresh and special stipulations been added thereto? This is the secret of the contracting parties, and we do not profess to penetrate it.[1] Let us then keep to the hypothesis that the Government has entered into no other obligations than those which were fixed by the two Empires in the first instance.

We have related the circumstances under which

[1] On comparing the terms of the treaty of 1879, with the declaration Count Münster had been instructed to make, under certain circumstances, to M. Goblet with reference to the Massowah incident, one might perhaps form the conclusion that Italy had obtained pledges which Germany had not stipulated for with Austria, at least in so far as France is concerned. See note on pp. 144, 145.

Germany and Austria became allied. Germany, we must here repeat, after mutilating France, had deprived Russia of most of the advantages her victories should have secured to her. Austria, on her side, had reaped the benefits of a war she had not waged, and, without its costing her either a man or a florin, she had been placed in possession of the influence which the Court of St. Petersburg exercised in the Balkans. The Empires of Central Europe, the two accomplices, we might say, had a common interest in maintaining this state of affairs, and one can understand their uniting together in order to shield the new balance of power they had formed to the detriment of France in the West and Russia in the East, from all attack. Was Italy, on her part, obliged to look to her position? Had she new acquisitions to protect, perils to foresee and avert? In the explanations the Italian Government has given on this subject, it has always adopted sober and laconic language which does not permit one to clearly elucidate either the cause or the aim of its determination. Signor Crispi, when questioned, has said as follows: "The policy we intend to follow is one of peace and not war; it can only be opposed by those who are of opinion that Italy would be better off if she were *isolated*. . . . . The treaty of alliance is not the cause of our armaments. . . . . Their sole object is the defence

of our rights and *frontiers*." (Sitting of May 15th, 1890.)

Italy, therefore, according to her Prime Minister, had allied herself to Austria and Germany, not in the interest of her greatness, but to safeguard the integrity of her dominions; and, to leave no doubt as to the dreaded enemy, he incidentally alluded to the treaty of Campo-Formio which delivered over the Venetian Republic to the vanquished of Rivoli and Montenotte. How could France, just recovering from her terrible disasters, incapable of any thought but that of devoting all her efforts and all her resources to repairing her discomfiture, have had the idea of picking a quarrel with Italy, whilst the victorious and powerful enemy of yesterday was on the watch? And why too should she have conceived such a chimerical and at the same time guilty design? Was it in order to make up for her losses on the Rhine? But in 1882, when Italy gave her signature to the treaty, our army was only being formed, its ranks were as incomplete as its appliances. Could we, moreover, have crossed the Alps without Germany's consent, and would she have given it us? Would we have combined with the Holy See for the dismemberment of the Kingdom we had helped to establish, and would we have wished, do we wish now as is so frequently stated, to restore the Pope's temporal power? Is it not in Germany that there

exists a powerfully organised Catholic party, with which the authorities have to reckon, which demands the return of the Jesuits and openly declares its intention of assisting to replace the Holy Father in possession of Rome and its territory. To attribute such intentions to the French Republic, to a Government of secularisation, is to strangely impose on the credulity of the public. In alluding to the treaty of Campo Formio, Signor Crispi ventured on a sort of international anachronism which deceived nobody; he confounded two epochs which had no analogy between them, suppressed a whole century in the history of France and Italy, during which the First Empire laid the foundations of Italian unity by setting up a national Kingdom in the north of the peninsula, and the second won the battle of Solferino, which permitted that unity to be definitively constituted. One is justly surprised to hear the head of a representative Government use such language, and one is tempted to say with Mr. Gladstone, that master of parliamentary government, "It would be grotesque if it were not fatal."[1]

Indeed, with Signor Crispi's doctrine as to alliances, no State could feel secure if it confined itself to maintaining amicable relations equally with all its neighbours. The defence of his *frontiers*

[1] *Contemporary Review.*

necessitates that he should ensure the assistance of some Powers to protect him against the greediness of others. This is a principle of public right founded on mistrust which masters of science had not taught down to our time. If it were universally observed, it would divide Europe into two or more groups, armed against one another and ever ready to come to blows. Would the conception be a happy one, or the result praiseworthy? Alliances have been formed in all times; they were offensive when the contracting Powers had an immediate combination in view, advantages that were foreseen and definite. Prussia united with Austria in order to invade Denmark and despoil her. Alliances have been defensive under the presentiment of a danger it was urgent to avert or encounter. That is the case, in a certain measure, with the Austro-German union. But, again, who was menacing Italy? to what perils were her unity and independence exposed? She was living in perfect harmony with all her neighbours, no necessity forced her to alienate her liberty of action, to take a place at once in coming struggles if such are to break out. What other Power has thought of undertaking obligations, of binding itself for contingencies which are fortunately not imminent? The present was in no way exposed, why did she engage herself for the future? Can she tell what it has

in store for her, and would she not have been better advised in awaiting events so as to act according to circumstances and to the best of her interests? Without cause, without urgency, why has Italy engaged herself, even contingently, to draw the sword against France, to guarantee Germany the peaceful possession of Alsace and Lorraine, and Austria the integrity of her dominions including Trieste and Trent? Ah! if Silvio Pellico, if Confalonieri and all the martyrs who have left their bones in the Spielberg dungeons, if Cavour and all the illustrious pioneers of Italy's deliverance, could leave their graves, how indignantly they would condemn a policy which has resoldered the chains of their days of mourning!

But if the two arguments, the only ones brought forward so far, do not support the discussion, if Italy has nothing to fear from France, if isolation with its pretended dangers is a sophism more captious than diplomatic, what were and what are still the advantages the Italian Government has in view? Did it ally itself to the powerful for the purpose of participating in the spoils? Signor Crispi protests against such an injurious imputation. Yet the treaty stipulates for duties and liabilities. What will be the compensations for them, and are they sure to be forthcoming?

Count Bismarck in 1866, by means of expedients analogous to those he employed to catch Italy in

his diplomatic net, Count Bismarck signed treaties of *defensive* alliance with the South German States, consequently implying, above all, that their sovereign independence should not be assailed. Four years afterwards, at Versailles, the Princes of these States, who had faithfully placed their armies at the disposal of the King of Prussia, although they had not engaged to do so, had to take rank among the vassals of this same sovereign, hailed Emperor of Germany. By recalling this historical and undeniable fact, we do not mean to say that such will be the fate of the King of Italy. It is absolutely far from our mind to suggest such an offensive thing. We merely wish to show, by a striking example, what becomes of the most solemn engagements between two Powers of unequal strength, and how imprudent it is for the weaker to ally itself to the stronger. If the Italians chose to recall their good and bad treatment, they might themselves teach us this lesson. One of them, a lucid and far-seeing patriot he, showed them, last year, in a publication they should make their national breviary,[1] how carefully they should mistrust Prussia. They would see therein that King William, among all the Sovereigns of Europe, was the last to recognise the new Kingdom, that he did so at France's

[1] The *Italia*, attributed to M. Visconti-Venosta, who has not however, so far as we know, admitted the authorship.

solicitation and in order not to separate himself from the Emperor of Russia; they would see that the Berlin Cabinet took up the defence of the fallen Princes whose subjects had gone over to the Piedmontese, in some official communications that were arrogant and insulting for King Victor Emmanuel's dignity. They would know that, in order to obtain Austria's participation in Denmark in 1865, Count Bismarck had promised her the assistance of the Prussian army in Venetia in the event of France intervening to support an aggression on the part of Italy, thus reviving, on his own account, the clause of the Treaty of Campo Formio which Signor Crispi so lightly recalled. But what more particularly deserves their consideration is the Prusso-Italian treaty, a treaty of defensive and offensive alliance entered into at Berlin in 1866.[1] This document had only been signed a few days when Count Bismarck, suddenly assuming that he had reason for mistrusting the Cabinet at Florence, declared to the negotiators that, in King William's opinion, it only bound King Victor Emmanuel. Should Austria, said he to them, confine herself to attacking Italy, Prussia will not owe you any assistance; if she directs her aggression against our frontiers, Italy will owe us the immediate assistance of the whole

[1] It is described besides on the authority of official documents, in General La Marmora's work: *Un po' più di luce.*

of her military stength. This interpretation of the treaty was not only leonine, it was an insult offered to the good faith of the Italian Government, in the face of a text which admitted of no ambiguity. However, the war broke out, and after Sadowa, negotiations were opened for an armistice. The treaty of alliance stipulated that neither armistice nor peace should be concluded except by the consent of both parties. Count Bismarck received the Austrian plenipotentiaries at Nikolsburg, and negotiated and signed with them an armistice and preliminaries of peace, which omitted nothing of what was ultimately contained in the definitive Treaty of Prague, without the participation and in defiance of the protests of Count Barral, the Italian representative at the Prussian headquarters. What a bitter mockery! The first clause of the preliminaries was thus worded: "The King of Prussia *undertakes to induce* his ally, the King of Italy, *to give his approval* to the preliminaries of peace and the armistice as soon as the Venetian Kingdom has been placed at the King of Italy's disposal by a declaration of the Emperor of the French." The work from which we take these facts, which are, moreover, notoriously distressful for the Italian Government, adds: "Of King William we will say but a word: Italy's loyal assistance[1] had en-

[1] Austria, previous to the outbreak of hostilities, had offered Italy,

abled him to become the most powerful Sovereign in Europe, and he was so discourteously ungrateful as to not even mention his ally's name in the speech he read to the Prussian Parliament on the 5th of August following." The King displayed no more deference for Italy's Sovereign than Count Bismarck had shown to her Ambassador. Has France ever treated her ally of 1859 in this manner? She looked after her personal interests in North Africa, she protected those of her commerce and industry; she has never broken faith. She united with Italy to assist her in throwing off the foreign yoke. Has she ever thought of forming an alliance against her with some other Power?

Will the treaty of the Triple Alliance be more loyally observed? We leave it to the Italians to answer this question. If they take note of the teachings of history, if the past is any criterion of the future, they will recognise with us that, in this respect, they will do better to pray than hope. In any case, if war breaks out and favours the allies, the Italians would be foolish to doubt that Germany would take the lion's share. The

through the intermediary of France, to give up Venetia to her, if she consented to withdraw from the alliance. In spite of the most urgent representations of the Cabinet at Paris, the Florence Cabinet declined the proposal, considering that loyalty demanded it should keep to its engagements. Count Bismarck and his Sovereign were aware of this. Did they remember it at Nikolsburg?

Adriatic would certainly become a German lake. Great Britain, who is never caught napping, she proved it again at the Berlin Congress, would turn the Mediterranean into an English lake. Whatever advantages might be attributed to Italy, they would not compensate for those her partners would be sure to reserve to themselves, the profits having to be in proportion, so it would be said, to the forces employed by each of them. Signor Crispi has spoken of Campo Formio; why does he not think of the treaties of Vienna? They are of more recent date; in them Italy was looked upon as a geographical expression and pulled to pieces, the better to dispose of her easily. The next meeting will be at Berlin, and there the domineering spirit will preside over the deliberations of this new Congress, more energetically still than in 1815. Italy may perhaps emerge from it increased in size, but relatively diminished, without a counterpoise to defend herself against the colossus she will have helped to raise in the centre of Europe, without France, rendered powerless, who nevertheless smiled on her both in good and evil fortune. If the fate of arms were against the allies, would vanquished Germany have more consideration for Italy than victorious Prussia showed her at Nikolsburg? Would she not willingly and promptly sacrifice her to obtain

peace on less onerous conditions? Has it not ever been so when the vanquished have been of unequal strength?

## IX.

But without considering such grave contingencies any further, let us see with what weight the Triple Alliance already presses upon Italy, what it costs her in times of peace. She had to make the heaviest sacrifices during the period of her emancipation, in order to meet what we will call her preliminary expenses. She issued loans to the extent of ten milliards of lire which were negotiated at Paris. Her Budget of the first ten years showed an annual mean deficit of 334 millions. In 1871 it had dropped down to 47 millions. It disappeared entirely in 1875, to give place to a permanent surplus which amounted to 51 millions in 1882, the *anno d'oro* as this same year was called, in spite too, let it be remarked, of a decrease in taxation of about 100 millions. This state of constant prosperity allowed of the abolition of forced currency.

In this same year of 1882, the Treaty of Alliance made its appearance with its train of extraordinary expenses, the commixtion of the German Great General Staff, the obligation of increasing the strength of the army and navy,

of forming Alpine battalions, and of constructing strategical railways. The deficit immediately reappeared in the Italian Budget; and clung to it to remain there henceforth as master. Such was the first consequence of the Triple Alliance. It soon produced another: the termination of the treaty of commerce with France when, in spite of the tariff, the receipts of the customs suffered considerable reduction, and have continued falling off notwithstanding all the efforts of the Government to stay their downward tendency.[1] Thus the policy inaugurated by Depretis and continued in a more pronounced manner by Signor Crispi, has had, from the outset, the double result of increasing the expenditure and reducing the resources of the treasury. This can clearly be seen from all the statistical papers published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, and has been moreover shown to the world by the statement of the Finance Minister in the Chamber on January 27th, 1890. Signor Perazzi admitted a total deficit of 461 millions for the ordinary and extraordinary budgets together.[2] During the

[1] Exports during 1887 (including precious metals) 1,109 millions.
„ „ 1888 „ „ „ 967 „
Decrease 142 millions
We have seen that the treaty expired on *March 31st*, 1888. This decrease, therefore, is only for the last ten months of the financial year.

[2] Signor Gianpietro, a deputy, and a highly distinguished

first ten months of 1890, according to the latest documents we have been able to consult, the exports, without having ever ceased to diminish, have still further decreased to the extent of 76 millions. But this does not embarrass the President of the Council. What do you mean, he said, by speaking of the burdens that weigh upon the country? What, after all, does Italy spend on the support of a military position which makes her "Austria's and Germany's equal? Scarcely 18 francs per inhabitant, whilst Germany pays 19 and France 35." Signor Crispi has a singular way of understanding and dealing with economic questions. Without checking these figures, the exactitude of which seems to us, at first sight, controvertible, we will take the liberty of pointing out to him that the tax-paying capacity of each inhabitant, when compared to that of an inhabitant of another country, should be valued according to the direct rate of the general wealth of each of the two, and a good economist might perhaps prove to him that the 35 francs paid by a Frenchman are less burdensome to him than the 18 francs which weigh down an Italian. If he chooses to consult the lists of the value of labour on either side of the Alps, he will obtain a first

economist, who was the reporter of the bill on contracts, estimates the combined deficits of the last three years at a milliard.

insight which will sufficiently enlighten him. However this may be, one has seen the result of the repeal of the commercial treaty in Italy; in France, on the contrary, the receipts and exports have continued to increase notwithstanding the injury our transactions have suffered with the peninsula. France could, if necessary, bear further burdens; could Italy do so? One must doubt it after the declarations Signor Crispi made to embellish his recent speech at Turin which can be resumed in a few words: no more loans, no increase in taxation. It is right to mention that he was speaking on the eve of the elections.

Why, after all, be alarmed? say the Allies to us. We have united to preserve peace, to ensure it if necessary, and we earnestly repudiate all thought of aggression. It would be impossible to be more affirmative than Prince Bismarck has shown himself, in this respect, on every occasion; and little accustomed though we are to feel that confidence in a Prime Minister's word which it should always inspire, we prefer to believe that he has expressed his thought entirely. We are equally persuaded that his successor, the faithful interpreter of his Sovereign's intentions, is devoting himself to the same policy. Is not Germany's ambition amply satisfied? What interest could lead her into fresh con-

flicts? In the state in which things are at present, who would dare tempt fortune? Is not war as formidable to the nations to whom it brings victory as to those who suffer defeat? It is assuredly not Austria who would care to risk such a perilous adventure. As for Italy, we have said what we think of her intentions; it is not we who charge her with unavowable desires; it is Signor Crispi's adversaries of the Right and Left who attribute to him "bellicose designs that were stopped by the great Chancellor's fall." [1]

It is therefore peace that is desired — we do not gainsay it — but an armed peace with burdens that irritate and crush the various countries. And who is held responsible for it? France. What has been said? France is arming, she is nursing the thought of revenge; she obliges us to multiply our efforts in order to maintain

[1] At the Radical congress presided over by Count Pauciani. On the other hand one reads in the *Italia*, the work of a Conservative: "The sombre genius who directs German policy wanted Italy to do more than ruin herself in her public finances; he required that she should also feel ruined in her private fortune, and that, *per fas et nefas*, she might attribute this ruin to a neighbouring Power with whom, in Germany's military interest, he wished to see her for ever mortally embroiled.

"And in order to work out this abominable design, he has found an Italian statesman who is devoted to his secret schemes, a minister whose personal vanity he has roused to the point of rendering him completely blind, by making him bring about the rupture of commercial relations which were the means of livelihood to several million Italian families."

our superiority and be prepared to repel any aggression. What a derisive way of rendering homage to truth. France at the end of the last war had only the wreck of her armies left to her; she was without weapons and supplies; the victor had carried away all, besides the milliards. She went courageously to work to reconstruct everything, as the care of her defence, her dignity, her legitimate ambition to regain her place among the Great Powers, required. She entered on this immense task without boasting, in the silence of her grief, and submitting without complaint to the heavy sacrifices that had to be made. She had committed no other crime: who dare blame her for what she has done? Did she owe it to her enemies of yesterday to remain at their mercy, and leave her future to their generosity, which had already been put to the test? Disappointed as they were in Germany at seeing France rapidly repair the ruins caused by the war, they did not consider it opportune, during the first years following the conclusion of peace, to increase the military forces of the new Empire. The necessity arose out of the policy inaugurated by Prince Bismarck at the Berlin Congress, and it is to Germany that we owe the responsibility for the actual state of affairs in Europe. It cannot be laid at France's door.

What is this state of affairs, and what is it leading to? We have no need to relate the story of Germany's armaments. The Reichstag has often re-echoed with it. Every one knows, moreover, that fresh Army Corps have been formed, and that the troops mustered in Alsace and Lorraine have been several times reinforced. The object of Prince Bismarck's last parliamentary campaign, after so many others, was to increase the term of service to seven years, and give an additional 40,000 men to the standing army. His successor fought his first battle to obtain some extraordinary credits from the parliament for the Ministry of War. It is announced that Count Caprivi will ask for a further measure in the coming session. The Austro-Hungarian Empire has done its best to extend and strengthen its military power. Italy has emulated her Allies. We have seen in what penury she has plunged her finances; yet her Government does not seem in the least disposed to moderate her desire to imitate the other two Powers. Some economy may perhaps be realised on public works, on expenditure beneficial to the wealth of the country; but the grants asked for by the Ministers of War and Marine will not be perceptibly reduced.[1] This ruinous fever has

[1] If the new recruiting law is voted, it will add 150,000 men to the standing army, 200,000 to the movable militia, and 300,000 to

attacked all European States, both great and small, like an epidemic calamity. England herself has decided to devote 500 millions to the development of her maritime power.

When will this come to an end? There is nothing to assist us in forming an opinion. May we hope that a moment will arrive when disarmament by mutual consent will be forced by the course of events on all the Powers? "A dream," Prince Bismarck erewhile replied to one of his visitors; "every one will be mistrustful, no one will ever believe in his neighbour's loyalty. Stipulate for a control, and the *casus belli* will be perpetually at hand." Europe is therefore doomed to large armies ever increasing in numbers, weighing more and more on the taxpayers, becoming more and more harmful to industry and agriculture, and exhausting all the sources of general prosperity. "It is another form of war," the ex-Chancellor admitted to his interviewer, who was a Frenchman, "a war of golden guineas. What have you to complain of? Your wealthy nation is able to support it longer than others, and victory will be for the one who can hold out the longest." Has not the recluse of Friedrichsruh admitted by using such language

the territorial army, that is to say, 650,000 men, who will have to be provided with the necessary arms and equipments, which will entail an expense of 150 millions without counting the proportionate victualling.

the imperfections, we will say more, the dangers of his work? Far removed from power, has his genius revealed to him that he has launched his country, and Europe with her, along a road that has no peaceful outlet, or which, in his own mind, leads to ruin if not to war? Golden guineas become exhausted in time, and there is a limit to the patient resignation of populations, as of Governments. What will happen when the sacrifices are in excess of the resources? And that day will fatally arrive, for the organisation of fighting masses, with their armament, is now an operation dependent on science, whose duty it is to constantly improve them. The rifle, the cannon, the vessel, the ammunition, with the explosives, invented, manufactured, built, or prepared yesterday at great cost, become insufficient means of destruction to-morrow, and have to be replaced by fresh appliances in order that one Power may continue as strongly armed as its neighbour. It is a struggle without end or truce, which in each country devours the fruit of national labour, to the prejudice of all classes of the population. How can one be surprised, then, if the less fortunate are roused, if Socialists in spite of Draconian laws come in greater numbers to the Reichstag at each election? Germany is perhaps, of all countries, the one in which this state of affairs gives rise to the greatest

anger and the most vehement polemics.[1] Did not Prince Bismarck forget himself, did he utter language worthy of him, of a statesman desirous of exercising a salutary influence over misled public opinion, when he said in his last speech: "One does not wage war through hatred, otherwise France would be permanently at war, not only with us, but also with England and Italy, for she hates them both." Prince Bismarck is mistaken, hatred is not a feeling which easily obtains access into France. What other country has given her neighbours more brilliant proofs of sympathy and disinterestedness? The French flag has been seen in all parts where a noble cause has stood in need of defence. Has Prussia's been visible there? What has she done, moreover, to disarm our resentment? Has she shown any consideration for the dignity of the vanquished of the woeful year? Has she acted any better towards Russia, so long her docile Ally? A prey to the feeling she attributes to us, she has seen secret agents, an organised system

[1] Last April there appeared in Germany a work entitled, *Videant Consules*, and which is attributed to a General, an ex-Minister of Marine. Its object is to show that war must necessarily break out before long with France, but especially with Russia, "that veritable national enemy who oppresses everything German, who unduly holds the Baltic provinces, those countries won over to German influence at the price of German blood . . . . that bulwark of Germany . . . . where Russian barbarism, with its corruption and degenerate officials, takes the place of ancient equity and civilisation. . . . ."

of espionage everywhere; she has expelled, under divers pretexts, thousands of Russian subjects from the German Empire. Russia has not complained of the rigour of this measure, she has resorted to reprisals. They then attacked Russian stocks at Berlin and hampered their negotiation; these sought refuge at Paris, and one knows how they were received on our financial market. Other steps were taken on both sides, all equally actuated by animosity, and uneasy Europe assists at the spectacle provided for her by Germany and Russia in the north, and France and Italy in the south, adjacent Powers in a permanent state of administrative and economic hostility, applying themselves to a war of tariffs which has never been an omen of pacific relations.

And this is the peace which the Triple Alliance offers us and intends to enforce. A peace which leads Governments to excessive and irritating measures, a peace which exasperates and crushes the people, "a heavy and ruinous peace," according to Prince Bismarck's own avowal, "preferable," he added, "to the ruin which follows a war, even a successful one." Why did he not speak thus before inflicting the evils of war on Denmark, Austria, and France? At what price, besides, is this *ruinous* peace obtained? The agreement of the three Courts, by consolidating the interests of the contracting parties, has consoli-

dated the respective interests of other Powers. France and Russia have concluded no treaty ; they are, nevertheless, strongly united by feelings of mutual security, surely a more solid bond than the kind of sympathy that has brought Italy and Austria together. The Triple Alliance has thus divided the Continent into two camps constantly under arms, and ready on either side to come to blows. Is this a peace that is well guaranteed, a peace inspiring confidence, encouraging work and mutual dealings, bringing nations into closer intercourse and participating in their well-being? In short, is it durable? Can Europe continue paying the cost of it for ever? With the burdens it entails, is it not leading to war, to a struggle the more slaughterous since the combatants will be more numerous and more formidably armed? Yet it is to these frightful calamities, unless one succeeds in averting them, that the Triple Alliance has destined the civilised world. Such is the sad thought which the work elaborated by the three Courts brings to one's mind, whatever one may think or wish. A sense of the general interest of Europe causes every one to disavow and condemn it.

## X.

When one has followed Prince Bismarck step by step through his long career, it is impossible not to admire the powerful and marvellous faculties he placed at the service of his King and country during the first fifteen years of his ministry. He began at Frankfort, and from the first day he penetrated the future as the present, and evolved from it the programme he has so brilliantly carried out. Called upon to direct Prussia's policy, he approached each question successively with a confidence which neither the virulent opposition of the Elective Chamber nor the attitude of the other Cabinets could shake. In the Polish matter he won over Russia and caused England to draw back. Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell, those two proud champions, fade away in presence of his audacity. Without lingering over the nebulous doctrines of German professors, or the claims of the pretenders, he solves the everlasting question of the Duchies to his master's advantage by force of arms, and dismembers Denmark whose integrity Prussia had nevertheless guaranteed. After having led Austria into this first campaign, he turns on her, isolates her, fights her, and triumphs at Sadowa, thanks to the neutrality of

Russia and France, which he had been skilful enough to secure. He had still one adversary left to conquer, namely, France. He prepared himself for the task by obtaining the co-operation of the States of Southern Germany, whilst the Great General Staff was forging the weapons for the combat. When the moment for using force seemed to him to have arrived, he conceived the candidature of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern, and, in the face of astonished Europe, led the French Government to take the initiative of the war. Victory rewarded his far-sighted duplicity. *Sic itur ad astra.* Morality was in tears, but he was enabled to restore the ancient German Empire. Without a doubt the blunders of his adversaries contributed to his success; he himself committed none up to the crowning of his work; and if at that moment he had relinquished power to go, like a wise man, and meditate on the great things he had achieved, he would have remained not only comparable, but in some respects superior, to those who have left their ineffaceable trace in the history of nations.

To have been all and to be nothing was to abdicate; heroic effort incompatible alike with his temperament and the nature of his mind. He had a thought of it, however, it is said; but either he did not know how to, or else could not bring himself to make the sacrifice. He must regret not having done so. He preferred, without

any other ambition perhaps, to dedicate the remainder of his life to consolidating the edifice his hands had raised. But fickle fortune imposed on him the obligation of resigning and of submitting to the desertion, we will not say insulting, of the press which had so slavishly obeyed him. The fact is that, with the Empire restored, there began what we may be permitted to call his second manner, the period of his ministry during which his genius went astray. At home he raises the Kulturkampf and does not show to his advantage. He sets the most formidable economic problems by making himself the pioneer of state socialism, become a subject of grave anxiety for some and of blind aspirations for the others. He has not in reality solved a single question; he has left the country a prey to an agitation which gave the new Sovereign matter for thought. Abroad, he has not spared France; he has threatened her with the idea of keeping her in a state of constant inferiority. He did not foresee, on this occasion, that Russia, alarmed in her turn, would no longer leave him a free hand. When he had convinced himself of this, his anger was aroused. He regarded the companion, so devoted, so constant, of former days, with suspicion. He forsook her to fly to other friendships. He was thus led to disserve Russia and load Austria with his favours. He entered

passionately into this scheme at the Berlin Congress. But, from that moment, it no longer sufficed for Germany to mount guard on her western frontier, she had also to reckon with the powerful Empire of the North. Instead of one adversary she had two. And we have seen the Chancellor seeking support, applying himself eagerly to isolating France, uniting with Austria, then with Italy, organising in short, in all respects, the Triple Alliance. Unfortunate combination for the present generation, fraught with peril for generations to come. He has thus more deeply dug the abyss which separates the German Empire from the two rival Powers; he has sown hatred, to borrow one of his own words of which he made such regrettable use, between Austria and Russia, between France and Italy. What will Germany reap from it? The future will show; but the future is not less gloomy and full of menace for her than for her neighbours. Such is Prince Bismarck's last work.

How immense and brilliant would be the glory of the Prince who would undertake to save Europe from the perils to which she is exposed! The Man of Iron has laid down the burden which he has borne too long for himself as for his contemporaries. Will there not arise a new man, a genius, that of peace, of true peace, who would restore repose and security to the Nations? Is

it then impossible for the Powers to assemble together in a spirit of cordiality and sacrifice? Diplomacy has unravelled more complicated situations than this. It possesses formidable resources, as we have seen at the Berlin Congress, which was the triumph of egotism and cupidity; but it has also precious ones, and it would repair the harm it has done by entering into transactions for re-establishing harmony on the Continent and placing the European balance of power on an equitable basis, by appeasing legitimate regrets and indestructible expectations. Is this but a dream? Who will blame us for indulging in it?

These pages were written, when suddenly came Signor Crispi's fall. Is the retirement of the Italian statesman more voluntary than the great Chancellor's? It is neither more nor less so, but has other causes. Prince Bismarck was too powerful for a young Sovereign proud of the glories of his ancestors, passionately smitten with the traditions of his house. The one or the other had to consent to the mutilation of his authority, or to abdicate. The master insisting on the full exercise of all his rights, the servant bowed before him and resigned all his offices. Signor Crispi withdrew, in his turn, from the part he had assumed. It was certainly not the crown that forced this determination on him. No disagreement existed

between the President of the Council and the Sovereign. It is also to be observed that at the time Prince Bismarck relinquished power nothing in the internal or external affairs of the Empire demanded it. His credit in Europe, like his prestige, was immense: he possessed moreover the entire confidence of Germany. At every opportunity, he had exerted himself to convince the different Governments and public opinion of his love of peace, and of his firm resolve to maintain it. One has seen in what resounding terms he affirmed this in the last speech he pronounced in the Reichstag. Was Signor Crispi in as brilliant a situation? His policy rested on a pretended danger which, threatening the Kingdom's frontiers, imposed on the Government the duty of placing itself in a position to avert it. The accession of Italy to the Triple Alliance, said he, never had any other aim. It was thus that he justified the armaments to which he devoted all the resources of his country without fear of involving it in debt. Yet the danger was an imaginary one. No one could have been more convinced of this than himself. Was he cherishing high and culpable ambitions under a false exterior? Was he dreaming of placing Italy in the front rank of Latin Nations? Did he meet with encouragement in this during the confidential conversations at Friedrichsruh? He may perhaps tell us himself

some day; but we have observed and we remember that his interpretation of the treaty of alliance, which is not that of his predecessor, dates from the first visit he paid to the German Chancellor. He could not however have concealed from himself for a moment that Italy would not be able to continue bearing burdens out of all proportion to her financial and economic power. He therefore considered armed peace a chimera and the conflict imminent. His attitude towards France, from the first to the last day of his ministry, justifies us in this opinion. In any case, he did not sufficiently bear this one consideration in mind, that between three allies the last word, the mighty resolutions, never belong to the weakest, who, once bound, is dependent on the will of the strongest. He has certainly at times agitated Europe and alarmed public opinion by his turbulent diplomacy. But at what price? Italy knows, and, from North to South, she demands the curtailment of expenses, a lessening of the heavy sacrifices his policy imposed on her. From that moment, the hour for the retirement of this Minister, yesterday still in possession of an uncontested authority, had struck. He submitted in his own way by a parliamentary rumpus. It was not thus that Prince Bismarck, whose glory visibly disturbed him, relinquished the reins of power. The one succumbed beneath

the weight of his faults, the other beneath the excess of his power and of the services he had rendered.

What will be the consequences of this event, which is assuredly of great importance? Will the system disappear with the minister who was its incarnation? We have shown under what circumstances and under the influence of what incidents the Italian people, misled by a wrongly inspired press, had themselves entered upon new ways. Proud of their recent emancipation, all investigation into their affairs, all appearance of tutelage irritated them. The recollection of services received galled them. France had assisted to cast off their chains, they drew away from her. But if they are susceptible and jealous, easily excited like all southern Nations, they are gifted with a deep-rooted and penetrating political understanding. When they make a mistake they repair it. Will the crisis they are traversing reveal to them the extent of the faults committed, will it show them that, in the actual state of affairs in Europe, they have naught to fear from their neighbours and should no longer suspect their intentions? We wish to believe so. Italy can indeed prosper and consolidate her power without committing herself in respect to disagreements in the face of which it is, on the contrary, to her interest, to preserve her entire liberty of action.

The fears instilled into her for the security of her frontiers, were never aught but a means to conquer and preserve power. Born yesterday, everything bids her employ her energy, all her resources, in establishing a firm position by encouraging her industries, protecting her commerce, and omitting nothing that would tend to freely open the sources of public prosperity to her national activity. In letters, arts, and politics she possesses a glorious past. Henceforth a Great Power, why should she not live her own life, instead of parting with any portion of her liberty under the conditions of an unequal reciprocity, whatever Signor Crispi may have said of the arrangement? Why should she not entertain perfectly cordial relations with all the States of Europe without distinction? Wrong as the conduct of the fallen Minister has been, France bears no malice. Faithful to her old friendship, obeying moreover her own interests, she will certainly not refuse to renew negotiations, and to arrive at an understanding which would enable the two countries to resume their commercial relations so inopportunely hampered to the detriment of both; jealous of her own independence and liberty, full of respect for similar feelings in others, she has no ambition for agreements of any different nature. If there is an Italy that has been too much heard, as has been said, there is another that has not

been heard sufficiently and which has retained all its sympathies for France. Whosoever has crossed the Alps has had an opportunity of satisfying himself on that point. The crisis, after all has run its course; it has been solved by the force of circumstances themselves. It behoves King Humbert's new advisers to right the situation upset by their predecessors, to set the pyramid back again on its foundation, if we may so express ourselves. To cover the deficit, reduce the expenses, place the Budget on a firm footing, diminish taxation, facilitate the access of fresh markets to national produce, that of France particularly, such will no doubt be their programme; they cannot conceive any other. The task may be laborious, but it is not difficult. The Chambers like the country, too long subjected to undeserved trials, will support a policy both reparative and fruitful in happy results. Count Rudini and his colleagues, by becoming its pioneers, fulfil, with the Sovereign's confidence, the expectations of all Italy's friends.

*February* 15, 1891.

# ARMED PEACE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

The old world is full of activity; but who is directing it, and what is the aim in view? It is high time attention were given to the matter. At what period of history has the universe had more sinister visions or caught a glimpse of a morrow so fraught with painful apprehensions? It labours however; and is discouraged by no kind of toil. It is notwithstanding alarmed at the exhausting warlike preparations, and is justified in wondering what fresh catastrophes threaten its near future? The times are gone when the people were strangers to the acts and enterprises of those governing them. In our days they know what occurs, and form opinions. They take advantage of the facilities for investigation placed within reach of all social classes, and are thereby enlightened; although they may not possess an exact notion of contingent perils and evils, which if not close at hand may still suddenly burst upon us, they are conscious of them. Universal and

compulsory military service has initiated the most humble, more or less, into all the secrets, all the means of destruction that science is unremittingly perfecting, and each has the presentiment of disasters unknown until now. No one requires, at present, to question a general or admiral to learn that bodies of troops or whole fleets can disappear in an engagement, at the first shock, and that the conquerors may be decimated as well as the conquered. The preparation of these formidable calamities is of itself a first evil that weighs cruelly on the entire Continent. The policy of progressive armaments on which the various Governments have entered fatally compels them to draw beyond measure from the sources of public wealth at the risk of exhausting them. Taxation, in a few years, has everywhere attained proportions that are beyond the economic power of the different States. These necessities engender misery which is already ruthlessly creeping into more than one country. Distress, in its turn, gives rise to trouble of another and a no less alarming order, and causes emigrations that recall a distant age; and they do not always meet with kindly welcome. We too frequently, indeed, witness the painful sight of large crowds crossing and recrossing the Atlantic, a lamentable odyssey, in fruitless search of a hospitable shore. Should these financial

and social difficulties, manifestly due to excessive taxation, be and remain the lot of the least favoured nations? When Italy is so seriously menaced by them, will other nations easily bear with similar drawbacks? No Power possesses inexhaustible resources; so that Europe is threatened with becoming a prey either to war or poverty. This alarming alternative deserves to be examined in all its aspects, and we propose, after having pointed out the causes of it, to sum up the consequences.

## I.

Europe was in the enjoyment of profound peace, and there was nothing to disturb her repose, when a Prince, already ripened by age, ascended the throne of his ancestors. King William I. of Prussia, who had long been cherishing ambitious views, had at the moment of his accession but one thought: it was for the army, for its reorganisation, for its development. What did he intend doing? Establishing Prussia's hegemony in Europe. Count Bismarck had foreseen and proclaimed this whilst still only a diplomatic agent at Frankfort. The King secured his co-operation by according him his entire confidence on raising him to power. It was thus that the future Emperor and future Chancellor, henceforth closely united,

resolutely undertook the task they have so gloriously accomplished for themselves, if unfortunately for Europe.

Their first victim was a lamb. The lamb, however, offered firm resistance; he put all his heart into it; but the wolf had a crony, and the two accomplices compelled Denmark to abandon to them her two best provinces: Schleswig-Holstein, however, had been guaranteed to her by a formal act binding all the Great Powers to ensure her the peaceful possession of them. Unfortunately, collective guarantees, founded on general interest, have usually been upset when placed in contact with vigorous or daring action. Not one of the contracting parties consented to behave in accordance with his obligations. When you examine the diplomatic documents of that period, you are quite taken aback at the eagerness with which the principal European Cabinets accepted the fallacious assurances that Count Bismarck unremittingly showered on them, notwithstanding the contradiction offered by events transpiring in the Duchies. He knew how to calm the alarm of some, anticipate the susceptibilities of others, sometimes invoking the honour of the arms engaged on the Elbe, sometimes the duties Prussia was performing, to her great regret, in her capacity of a feudal and *conservative* Power, promising, guaranteeing that nothing definite

should be done without the assent of the other Governments. Never at any other period of his long career, has he displayed more marvellous dexterity. We insist, by the way, on this point, because his success, in that first diplomatic engagement, certainly impressed on his mind that his convictions were sound, and because he gathered from it the certainty of conducting each of his ulterior enterprises to a happy issue. His patriotic cupidity would henceforth be upheld by unlimited confidence. Sovereign and adviser persuaded themselves that, thanks to the services rendered to Russia during the Polish insurrection, the moment, so longed for, had at last arrived to claim for Prussia, the authority and preponderance she had conquered under the reign of the Great Frederick and which his successors had so gravely jeopardised.

The obstacle this time was at Vienna. Prussia, indeed, could only assume a dominant position in Germany, by expelling Austria ; that result could only be attained by force of arms ; they resolved to have recourse to them. Whilst the Sovereign, on every occasion, repudiated all idea of arriving at such an extremity, the Minister made no secret of that being his aim. One tranquillised the Imperial Court at Vienna in his sweetest tones, the other prepared public opinion for coming events. The parts being thus distributed, it

required two years for each to perform his task; and, on the date they had appointed, General von Moltke was able to lead the victorious Prussian army forward. The decrepit Germanic Confederation was dissolved, Austria confined within her hereditary dominions, and Prussia aggrandised placed her heavy hand on the whole of Northern Germany. This time again Europe remained indifferent to the military and diplomatic successes of the House of Hohenzollern.

It has been asserted that Italian unity must fatally have engendered Germanic unity. We will not absolutely contradict this; but what is far more irrefutable, is that the preponderance of Prussia in Germany is due to a sort of tacit assent of the other Great Powers, and had it not been for their inaction in 1866, the Italian Kingdom would have been founded without giving birth to the German Empire. How was it possible for all these things to be accomplished? The thunderbolt of Sadowa which was in one single day to lay Austria low and ensure Prussia's triumph, was foreseen neither at London, Paris, nor St. Petersburg. The Powers made no attempt to draw together and agree. They were deterred from doing so by their rivalries. We have just seen with what astute skill Count Bismarck applied himself to encourage their dissensions, speaking a language ever suitable to the centre where he

held it. And this explains how Prussia was able to engage in a war that nothing had provoked, apart from her determined will to take the front seat in Germany; that is how she obtained from her victories the prodigious advantages she holds, without ever having consented to trouble herself about what Europe thought of them.

Peace came and was signed at Nikolsburg. In what position did it place the Powers who had not intervened in the war? France could not fail to see that she would in future have an ambitious and enterprising neighbour on her eastern frontier. Russia, who had not for long known what it was to have a rival in the Baltic, felt herself touched in the very centre of her influence. Prussia, formerly her vassal, now mistress of the Elbe Duchies and all-powerful in Germany, would before long be able to dispute her passage to the North Sea, and isolate her from Western Europe. Great Britain even, always jealous of any preponderance, saw a State rising in the heart of the Continent whose power would disturb the equilibrium her traditional policy had so judiciously arranged, a State which was already building fleets, and which would, one day, claim her share in the dominion of the seas. Did France, Russia, and Great Britain profit by the lessons taught by these recently accomplished events? France wished to ensure her security; we know what difficulties the

efforts of the Imperial Government encountered; Russia remained friendly to Prussia; England confined herself to looking on.

In the meanwhile a new conflict was in course of preparation; the force of circumstances rendered it inevitable, and there was a presentiment on every side that it was coming on. In public as in private life, one finds difficulty in resisting the winning charm, the fascinating allurement of success. All had smiled on Prussia — fortune, on the battle-field as in the lists of diplomacy, had gratified all her wishes, crowned all her efforts. Under the influence of such marvellous results, King William's ambition, encouraged and worked up to a pitch of excitement by Count Bismarck, took a new flight. The monarch and his adviser were no longer satisfied at having advanced the frontiers of the Kingdom, at having united to it, by the annexation of Hanover and Electoral Hesse, the two great parcels of national territory so long separated, of holding in their hands the whole of Germany, much more by the authority of might than of treaties; they resolved to have this ill-defined state of affairs consecrated by right, to re-establish the Germanic Empire, in fact, to the advantage of the House of Hohenzollern. Since Prince Bismarck has renounced discretion, since he has taken pleasure in talking of his good days, he has owned in more than one interview that such was

his thought on the morrow of Sadowa, that he was the first, as he was the last, workman who forged the Imperial crown. He claims, somewhat too frequently indeed, both the honour and advantage; and what he says is true. Before he had yet exchanged the ratifications of the Treaty of Prague he was, in fact, already taking measures to avoid paying any attention to it. This treaty stipulated that the Southern States should enjoy a sort of independence, and guaranteed them full autonomy. Prussian authority did not extend beyond the Main. He overthrew this barrier by imposing fresh clauses on these States, which were derogatory to the arrangements concluded with Austria, and made them subordinate to Prussia in a pretended alliance which was both offensive and defensive.

But if Prussia could, from that moment, dispose of the entire forces of Germany by invoking the authority of written agreements, these agreements themselves were contrary to the law of Europe, and could not therefore serve as a basis for the crowning piece of Prussian domination. If Germany were vanquished, prostrate at the feet of King William, Europe had not abdicated a single one of her international advantages. General treaties, that of Vienna particularly, conferred on her the right to decline to allow any other alterations in the

state of things existing in 1815, than those she had ratified. It was thus that Belgium could separate from Holland, and Prussia herself had always warmly invoked these stipulations whenever France had shown a disposition to elude them. It is true that at that period Count Bismarck had not yet appeared on the world's scene, and he consequently had not been able to trouble, by his violence, the respect of public right, whose salutary rules were formerly the basis of international intercourse and the best guarantee for the maintenance of peace.

But at the point we have reached in this rapid statement, King William and Count Bismarck were no longer in the necessity of seeking suitable methods to lead them to the end they had in view, those employed to dismember Denmark, to expel Austria from Germany, had succeeded admirably; they decided to have recourse to them again to crush the obstacle that detained them on the Main and prevented German union from the Alps to the Baltic. What Power could have the audacity to hinder their design? No other than France: She must be reduced by war to submission, and war with France, from that time, became the sole thought of the Sovereign and his advisers. They went to

work with the energy of men accustomed to triumph. General von Moltke gave all his care to tempering the weapon he had forged and which was to ensure victory; Count Bismarck sought for the best snare to set for France at the proper time.[1]

It was maintained for many years at Berlin, that Prussia provoked none of the conflicts in which she took part, that she on each occasion sharpened her weapons in defence only; if Count Bismarck was less affirmative, the King neglected no opportunity to cast the responsibility of the hecatombs marking his reign on others. These constantly reiterated affirmations, which have been several times re-edited in speeches from the throne, have hitherto led public credulity astray; the opinion of persons generally well informed, both in the press and in official circles, has suffered lasting influence from them. In spite of every effort, of the display of documentary evidence, notwithstanding the indiscretions of the intimate friends of the master of Friedrichsruh, and his own confessions, the conviction that France, in 1870, wished for and provoked war, has remained unshaken. It has prevailed in spite of the

[1] We are aware that Prince Leopold von Hohenzollern's candidature to the Spanish throne was thought of and prepared a long time before it was brought forward.

opinion and works of conscientious writers, in spite of the Chancellors Dangeau,[1] Herr M. Busch, who divulged everything in a book published in 1884[2]; in spite of Prince Bismarck himself, who to please his friends, in his rare moments of merry humour, had confessed the truth. Madame de Sévigné's saying is still true: "They have rhapsodized all, but what is said is said, what is thought is thought, what is believed is believed." The legend, that parasite of history, carefully encouraged by a salaried press, had thrown out such strong roots, had become so firmly impressed on people's minds, that it triumphed over all attempts to set it right. It was only dispelled by a revolt at the palace; it required the new Emperor, tired of the yoke of an imperious Minister, to come to the determination to cast it from him, and pack his adviser off into retirement, to his intense discontent: it required, moreover, that Prince Bismarck, in one of his angry moods, should enumerate all his claims to the gratitude of the Hohenzollern dynasty, without omitting the responsibility he had assumed by taking the initiative of a perfidious manœuvre, in the sinister thought of

[1] The Marquis de Dangeau was a witty courtier in the reign of Louis XIV. and the author of some valuable memoirs.—*Translator.*

[2] Unser Reichs-Kanzler, vol. ii., p. 65.

making war inevitable, without fear of thus giving the lie to all his previous affirmations, all the assurances to the contrary that he had served out to Europe whom he had thus made his dupe. We remember the resounding echo of this unexpected thunderclap. We know how the truth escaped, by a return to justice, from the mouth of him who had offended by denying it. Nothing was wanting this time, neither frankness nor details, so that it has been possible to re-establish the scene in all its exactitude as it occurred on a day that will be ever famous. It is meet to retain it, to evoke it, to place all the circumstances in their real light. If it confound the guilty, it will comfort public conscience: it will be a valuable lesson for future times.

It was July 13th, 1870. Generals von Moltke and von Roon were dining with Count Bismarck. All three were lamenting the peaceful issue which seemed likely to be the result of the negotiations at Ems. Suddenly a functionary came in with a telegraphic despatch from the King.[1] It related

[1] This despatch was for a long time confused with a report from Prince Radziwill, the King's aide-de-camp. The despatch received by Count Bismarck had been sent by Herr von Abeken, Counsellor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who had accompanied the Sovereign to Ems, for the purpose of keeping the Chancellor informed of events. Count Caprivi, in a speech at the Reichstag in the month of November, 1892, called attention to this error and thoroughly elucidated the matter.

the events of the day for the information of the Ministers at Berlin; it in no way conveyed the notion of complications being imminent, nor of the approaching mobilisation of the army. Count Bismarck read it to his guests. "Roon and Moltke," the Chancellor has since said, in an account attributed to him and which he has not disclaimed, "dropped their knives and forks together. We were all very low-spirited. We all felt the matter was *ending in smoke.* I then addressed Moltke and put this question to him: 'Is the instrument we require for war, our army, is it really good enough for us to commence hostilities whilst relying in all probability on success?'— 'We have never had a better instrument than now,' he answered. Roon, in whom, it is true, I had less confidence, fully confirmed what Moltke had said.

"'Very well, then, quietly continue your dinner,' I observed to my two colleagues. I seated myself at a round marble table placed beside that at which we were eating; I carefully read the despatch over again, I took my pencil and deliberately obliterated all the passage in which it was said Benedetti had asked for another audience. I only left the commencement and the end of the communication. The despatch, now, had *quite a different appearance.* I read it to Moltke and Roon in the new form *I had given it.*

They both exclaimed: 'Magnificent! That will produce an effect.' We continued to eat with a capital appetite. You remember what followed."

One hardly knows what to think, and is quite dumbfounded in presence of these three Germans mutually exulting at a feast over the idea of crushing the Gaul, showing themselves in turn delighted or in dismay accordingly as war seems imminent or the affair likely "to end in smoke." But it did not suffice to have garbled the despatch so as to alter the exact sense. There remained the use to be made of it in order to *produce an effect.* The effect anticipated was a double one, rapid and decisive. It must take the form of an outburst of national indignation in Germany as a result of wounded pride, and a cry should be raised for war so as, if necessary, to influence the King's will. At Paris the affair must be regarded in the light of an outrageous insult, so as to force France to take the initiative of hostilities and consequently assume the responsibility of them in the eyes of Europe. One of the principal actors in the scene wrote from the commencement: "At Ems there was neither insulter nor person insulted." Count Bismarck arranged his text in such a way that there were, at the same time, two insulters and two persons insulted. Any one, indeed, reading the despatch after he had revised it, would come to the con-

clusion that the Ambassador had been wanting in the respect he owed the King, whilst his Majesty had ignored the prerogatives of the French representative in an offensive way, by forbidding him his residence. Consequently, both of them, at the same time, became insulters and persons insulted. In order that the effect might be produced with this double inference Count Bismarck, before even the meal of the three conspirators was at an end, and whilst they continued eating with "a capital appetite," gave orders for the despatch to be sent round to the evening papers with an intimation to the "reptiles" to sound a flourish, that is to say an appeal to arms, according to a remark General von Roon attributes in his correspondence to General von Moltke. Before the end of the evening the despatch had been telegraphed to several of Prussia's diplomatic agents with instructions to communicate it to the Governments to which they were accredited. It was foreseen that their French colleagues would in this way be rapidly informed, and that the blow would produce all the more effect at Paris from reaching the capital through the intermediary of various foreign Governments. It must be acknowledged that Count Bismarck, on this solemn occasion, did not make the slightest mistake. Everything happened in conformance with the programme he had prepared. Intense excitement

spread throughout Germany, like a train of gunpowder. The King, on his way back from Ems two days later, was welcomed all along the line by enthusiastic acclamations; he left the train at Potsdam, and, after a brief council held at the railway station, gave orders to mobilise the army. The insult was felt in France as deeply as Count Bismarck had foreseen, and on July 15th the Minister announced the declaration of war to the Chambers.

But it is none the less acknowledged now, that this war had been premeditated by Prussia a long time previous, and that it was the outcome of her Chancellor's duplicity. *Habemus confitentem reum.* He frankly confesses his misdeed now; he considers it his most precious claim to the gratitude of his Sovereign and Fatherland. A newspaper that he inspires, and which is his acknowledged organ, wrote some time ago: "Prince Bismarck by modifying the famous telegram from Ems, by constraining France to assume the initiative and responsibility of war, deserved well of his country." He has not, however, always held this proud language. He has changed it according to circumstances and his frame of mind. Shortly after peace was re-established, Herr Liebknecht denounced, in his newspaper, the forfeiture the Chancellor had been guilty of, and which was already being whispered from ear to ear; Prince

Bismarck had the socialist writer prosecuted, and he was fined. Things are now the reverse of what they were; and what Prince Bismarck has been contradicting for more than five-and-twenty years with most solemn denials, he now declares to be a positive truth. This truth authorises the suggestion that if Prince Bismarck has a right to reward for his conduct, he cannot refuse the blame it deserves, and history will certainly have something more to say: it will conclude from this fact, now thoroughly established, that the vanquished of 1863 and 1866, the Danes and Austrians, sought for war no more than the French, and that the Prussian Government was on each occasion the aggressor without any righteous cause, but actuated solely by motives of cupidity. The reprobation of this bloodthirsty policy has preceded the judgment of posterity. Prince Bismarck's avowals have, in fact, raised a general outcry of indignation in Europe; the English, who were so long duped by his manœuvres, have been wounded in their pride, and do not conceal their resentment; the Germans themselves have felt "the blush of shame rise to their brow" on learning that the country had been infamously deceived.

However, we wish to emphasize but one essential point in regard to the various matters to which we have just called attention; namely, that Europe

would have lived in peace and complete security, had Prussia remained within the limit of her rights, had she performed all her duties as a Continental Power, particularly the one commanding her respect of treaties; that by giving way to her ambition she has extended her frontiers, but she has done so by substituting a new arrangement, devoid of stability and offering none of the necessary guarantees for maintenance of universal peace, to the old state of things sanctioned by time and by the formal consent of all interested parties.

## II.

Have King William and Prince Bismarck ever been conscious of this extremely unsettled situation? Have they exerted themselves to remove its most prominent disadvantages? There is nothing to indicate such a thing. Peace concluded with the foreigner, Prince Bismarck, ever a prey to his passion for combativeness, engaged in the *Kulturkampf* struggle at home, with a powerful fraction of the country. He had no serious grievance against the Catholics of the kingdom; they had fought bravely and shed their blood as subjects of the King; but they formed a party with which it was necessary to reckon; the Chancellor wished to subjugate, if not to crush, that

party. We are aware of the rigorous measures he inflicted on their conscience as Christians. They defended themselves with all the energy of their faith, and, if at the end of this conflict the Chancellor did not go to Canossa, both he and the Emperor Frederick, had to do penance by annulling the draconian laws, one after the other, which he had made Parliament vote. In his dictatorial zeal he engaged in other measures. Until then he had professed free trade opinions; he made himself the apostle of protectionism, and, advancing his new doctrines to the last extremity, attempted to inaugurate State Socialism in the young German Empire.

It is thus that we shall see him going astray more and more in his erroneous notions.

Amongst all Prince Bismarck's anxieties France continued to occupy the first place. He never took his defiant glance off her, however intense the hostilities he encountered, or better, that he had himself raised in Germany, might be. At one moment he fancied the institutions our country had bestowed on herself would give him peace, for he considered them a powerful obstacle to her resuscitation. On leaving Versailles he felt convinced that it would be long before she could repair her disasters, and that the enormous war indemnity he had inflicted on her, coupled with the necessity of renewing her armament and

erecting other lines of defence, would effectually incapacitate her from reassuming the position she had lost among the Great Powers. When he passed through Frankfort on his return to Berlin he had expressed his confidence in peace having been ensured for half a century; the saying was retained and re-echoed throughout Germany. France is, fortunately, a more wealthy country than he had supposed. The soil is fertile, the inhabitants laborious; one works, the other produces. Although the Frenchman may be accused of giddiness, he is thrifty and economises. When his Government issues a loan, he produces his money, convinced by patriotism as much as by interest that there is no better investment for it. So events soon gave a contradiction to Prince Bismarck's previsions. France paid him his five milliards, not without difficulty, but more promptly than he had expected. Order reigned without any likelihood of its being disturbed; work had been actively resumed in the factories and fields; and the Government was proceeding successfully with the reorganisation of our military forces. In 1875, when it wanted to form the fourth battalions, alarm was felt at Berlin, and war again haunted the minds of the King's advisers, if not of the Sovereign himself. They imagined they had not sufficiently crushed France, and resolved to continue the work of 1870, being of opinion that

it had not been pushed far enough. The venal press opened the campaign. An article published in a semi-official newspaper, the *Post* of Berlin, denounced to Germany the schemes attributed to the Republican Government, as well as the ardent desire of the French people to take revenge, and pointed out the imperious necessity imposed on the German Empire to anticipate these sinister designs. The exportation of horses was forbidden at the same time. This theme soon became that of every accredited organ in Germany ; and the minds of all, even the least timid, were soon filled with apprehensions of an imminent struggle.

Before hastening the event, they wished to ensure Russia's neutrality. Prince Bismarck and General von Moltke could not conceal from themselves that it would be impossible for them to lead on the Emperor William until they had obtained this precious guarantee. Herr von Radowitz was despatched to St. Petersburg, but notwithstanding his recognised diplomatic skill, he failed in his mission. He was later on disavowed in a view easy to understand. "Herr von Radowitz," recently remarked the intemperate hermit of Friedrichsruh, "was never my confidant, for, although he has inherited many qualities from his father, he has also inherited the habit, fatal in a diplomatist, of talking too much, and of letting out everything

after the third glass;" an appreciation as devoid of reason as of justice. The truth is that Russia, in her turn, was becoming alarmed at the preponderant part the new Empire, or rather her impetuous Chancellor was arrogating to himself in Europe, and was convinced he would keep no account of the services she had rendered; she had from that moment a just presentiment that she would only meet with ingratitude at Berlin the first time occasion offered. Herr von Radowitz, in presence of this feeling, had lost the suit he was entrusted with defending, beforehand. The Emperor Alexander II. had a magnanimous heart; as soon as he was informed of the aggressive views of the German Government he communicated them to General Le Flô, assuring him that he would not permit France to be again invaded without just cause and merely to satisfy a brutal feeling of ambition. Shortly afterwards he had an opportunity of passing through Berlin, and, having conferred with the Emperor, his uncle, he was able to telegraph that all danger was over.

Prince Bismarck has, since then, openly, obstinately repudiated the calculations attributed to him. He has, however, acknowledged that the Great General Staff had conceived them, and had advised a second appeal to arms without the least delay. The Man of Iron did not confine himself to repelling the accusations brought against him

personally ; he went further, and cast all the responsibility of the incident on the chief of the army. "Moltke," he told Herr Blum in the course of interviews intended for publication, "was the *malefactor* on that occasion." But when did he use that language? After the illustrious Marshal's death. Is it not rather Prince Bismarck who deserves this qualification which we have borrowed from him, when he glorifies himself for having constrained two great nations to settle, by arms, a conflict that could easily have been avoided had it not been for his wily intervention?

Prince Bismarck's interested denials, moreover, are daily refuted by documentary evidence which throws a vivid light on the crisis we have just recalled. The notes left by M. Gavard, our Chargé d'Affaires at London at this period, have recently been published.[1] These pages are full of valuable information ; they clearly show the British Government, first of all hesitating and even incredulous, then shortly afterwards convinced of the imminence of the danger threatening peace, and from that moment joining with Russia to avert it. We can only refer to them. We will nevertheless quote an extract from an interview between our representative and the Russian Ambassador on his return from St. Petersburg and having passed through Berlin, because it resumes

[1] See the *Correspondant* of November 25th, 1894.

the history of this smart thrill of alarm in a few words. "The danger," said Count Schouvaloff to M. Gavard, "lies in Prince Bismarck's fixed idea that France is preparing to attack Germany; and unfortunately, what is more grave, it is shared by Count von Moltke. The latter thinks you will be ready in 1876, and that the moment will be all the more favourable to you, as you will still have a class of old soldiers who have been to war; the Chancellor believes you wish to wait until 1877, but they both agree that you must be forestalled. They pretend you are the aggressors on the theory, new to them, that the real aggressor is not the one who attacks but he who renders war necessary, and they suggest as the result of another campaign an overwhelming indemnity coupled with a prolonged occupation. You know what our Emperor said to General Le Flô. I was instructed to repeat it at Berlin. I saw the old Emperor, who seemed first of all astonished at our anxiety; he really did not think war imminent, but he was the only person so ill-informed at Berlin. It was, therefore, not difficult to bring him to the point we desired, after he had been told. As to Bismarck, he knows he cannot attack Russia because of you, nor you if Russia is opposed to it. I therefore consider peace ensured." This page of contemporaneous history has been written, moreover, by the aid of docu-

ments taken from the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and recently published by M. Flourens. They comprise Prince Gortchakoff's expressions of regret at the line of conduct adopted by Russia in 1870, the terms of the bargain proposed by Herr von Radowitz, the declarations of Alexander II., who brought an interview with General Le Flô to an end by saying to him: "I will not permit all the laws of the civilised world to be transgressed and Europe plunged into the horrors of war again." [1] Such were the language and sentiments of the Czar himself. We have seen how his Majesty's Ambassador spoke. This is what Lord Derby said at a final interview with our Chargé d'Affaires, resuming their conversations: "The old Emperor does not wish for another war, and was ignorant, as we have seen, of the plotting going on around him. Prince Bismarck desires it, and is in a hurry to bring it on during the Emperor William's lifetime." All the denials of the first Chancellor of the new German Empire will not prevail in contradiction to the declarations of two such Governments as Great Britain and Russia.

Prince Bismarck, caught in the snare he had himself set, and foiled in his attempt to trouble peace, conceived a feeling of resentment which has ever since led him astray, and which was sure,

[1] *Alexandre II., sa Vie, son Œuvre.* Paris, p. 292 and following.

before long, to cause him, as we shall shortly see happened, to make an irreparable blunder. In a memorable speech which he delivered in the Reichstag, with a view to justifying his conduct, he said: "I have never turned aside from Russia; it was she who repelled me, and at times placed me in such a position that I was forced to modify my attitude to preserve my own dignity and that of Germany. This began in 1875, when Prince Gortchakoff gave me to understand how much his pride was nettled at the position I had attained to in the political world." Thus by his own avowal, his difference with Russia dates unmistakably from the year in which the grave incidents we have just recalled occurred, and this declaration suffices to establish that at that period the Czar's Government could have no doubt respecting the dark designs formed at Berlin. It has pleased Prince Bismarck to attribute the cause of this new departure in Russian policy to childish rivalry. The argument is not serious; it is even unworthy of so great a mind as his. No one will admit, indeed, that Russia found her inspiration, on this occasion, in the wounded pride of her Chancellor, who was jealous of the laurels gathered by his Prussian colleague. Everything, therefore, tends to show that the disagreement of the two Courts found its origin in the schemes conceived at Berlin in 1875, and that Prince Bismarck has himself given this

dissension a personal character. It is consequently only fair to leave him the responsibility of it, both in regard to its origin and consequences. On this ground, as on many others, his impetuous and haughty nature was fatally certain to lead him to most dangerous resolutions.

## III.

Before the end of this same year which witnessed the severance of the intimate intercourse between Prussia and Russia, an insurrection broke out in Herzegovina; it soon spread to all the provinces of the Balkan peninsula. It was pretended that Prince Bismarck had lent a hand to the outbreak; this accusation has never been proved; it shows, however, the tendency of public opinion at that time to attribute to him a desire to cause the Czar's Government difficulties in the East, where it would be at variance with England. If such a thought ever entered his head it met with all the success he could desire. Russia, after futile negotiations both with the Porte and the other Powers, in the impossibility of repudiating her ancient traditions, compelled to give attention to the religious feeling which was so strong in all classes of the population, had to take up arms

and march to the assistance of her co-religionists of the Ottoman Empire. She declared war against Turkey. We are aware of the sanguinary trials and immense sacrifices this struggle imposed on her. Her armies, notwithstanding, crossed the Balkans and arrived in sight of Constantinople. Turkey, vanquished, signed a treaty at San Stefano, which was above all favourable to the Christian populations, some being totally released from Turkish domination, whilst autonomy, guaranteeing analogous advantages, was bestowed on others. It was stipulated in this document, by a special clause, that Russia should exercise the right of supervision in the execution and maintenance of these arrangements. Great Britain saw in this a violation of the engagements the Czar's Government had contracted, in 1856, after the Crimean War, which would prevent her, she said, considering the stipulations of San Stefano as forming part of the law of Europe unless they were submitted to the approval of all the interested parties.

What were Prince Bismarck's feelings and behaviour on this momentous occasion? The moment was propitious for dispelling the prejudices he had implanted in the minds of the Emperor Alexander and his Government. If the Chancellor had acted in that way, Russia united to Germany, having nothing to fear from either

Austria or France, who were busy dressing their wounds, could have braved the anger of the British Cabinet and declined her intervention, as Prussia had had the courage to do after the campaigns of 1866 and 1870. King William's Government, or rather his Prime Minister, had on both occasions boldly repelled any intermeddling of the Powers in the arrangements he had resolved to impose on the vanquished. Prince Bismarck would have remained faithful to his own doctrine by supporting Russia against the pretensions of England, and he could easily have renewed the cordial understanding that had so long united the St. Petersburg Cabinet to that of Berlin. Forgetting the services rendered, Russia's friendly neutrality, without which the Prussian army would have had neither Sadowa nor Sedan to its credit, without which he could neither have expelled Austria from Germany, nor have invaded France, Prince Bismarck, under the influence of a feeling that was a secret for no one, espoused the views of the British Cabinet, and in conjunction with it compelled Russia to give her assent to the meeting of a Congress which at the suggestion of England, anxious to show her gratitude, assembled at Berlin.

They therefore met, under the presidency of Prince Bismarck, at the capital of the new Empire, to which such an honour had never yet

fallen. The Chancellor acquitted himself of his duties as *honest broker*, according to his own expression, which admirably reflected what was passing in his mind. What happened indeed? The stipulations of San Stefano were revised, notably in regard to the relations of the two contracting parties. For the control Russia had reserved to herself, was substituted that of all the Cabinets assembled; they thus modified the position she imagined she had reconquered in the East. And whilst England made the Porte abandon the island of Cyprus to her, it was decided at Berlin that Austria should occupy Herzegovina and Bosnia, which she still retains and is preparing to annex definitely. So that conqueror and conquered were both sacrificed to the passions and covetousness that ruled this areopagus. The treaty of San Stefano was thus torn to shreds; Russia retained none of the essential advantages she had exacted as the price of spilt blood; and Turkey, convinced, notwithstanding, that she had nothing but champions at Berlin, lost an island and two provinces there. Such was the result of the concerted understanding between Germany and Great Britain, which Austria joined, an understanding that owed all its strength and influence to Prince Bismarck's participation. The Chancellor was avenging himself for the rebuff of 1875; his pride was

satisfied; he had humiliated his rival Prince Gortchakoff, first Russian plenipotentiary at the Berlin Congress, in the face of Europe. But, it will be inquired, what was the Emperor William's attitude on this occasion? Did he not, in a great measure, owe his Imperial crown to the affectionate condescension of his nephew the Emperor Alexander? Had he not written to him on the eve of quitting Versailles: "Prussia will never forget that it is to you she owes the fact that the war was not allowed to assume greater proportions"? The Emperor William at the commencement of his reign never failed to control all the acts of his Government when he did not actually inspire them himself. History will record what part he took and to what extent he exercised his sovereign function, although it was cast in the background by the rackety activity of his Prime Minister; but at the period with which we are occupied fatigue and years had weakened his will; he rarely imposed it, and the Chancellor easily triumphed.[1] It is, therefore, established that Prince Bismarck, in 1875, as in 1878, at the Berlin Congress, conformed to

[1] We have seen from the notes left by M. Gavard, that Prince Bismarck, already in 1875, took upon himself to direct German policy without submitting his resolutions to the Sovereign's assent. We may therefore presume that three years later, taking advantage of the Emperor William's age, he proceeded with more absolute independence.

his own personal views, and he is consequently answerable to his country for the difficulties he has created for it, and which at the present day are apparent to all. He is certainly conscious of them, and since he has been away from power he has made a point at the numerous interviews to which he has complacently lent himself, of declining the responsibility and casting it on his successor. Vain efforts that have convinced no one, and have only served to place his failings in a brighter light and pain his warmest admirers. This opinion is current in Germany. In a pamphlet that appeared at Leipsic, and which has been attributed to a person in a high position, Prince Bismarck is denounced as "the sole author of the irretrievable rupture that has occurred between Russia and the German Empire."

Whilst still master of the destinies of Germany, he was, moreover, himself alarmed at the situation, the result of his personal policy, and considered it urgent to guard against it by means of a diplomatic combination. In 1879, the year following that in which the Congress assembled, he offered Austria a treaty of alliance. Unable any longer to look for support from the Empire of the Czars, he solicited the assistance of the Empire of the Habsburgs. The Vienna Cabinet, accomplice and beneficiary of the

German Chancellor, having been formally asked to consent to this agreement had to do so; and the pact was concluded. That was the origin of the Treaty of the Triple Alliance. Prince Bismarck chose, for a long time, to lead public opinion astray in regard to the origin of this arrangement. This is no longer a secret for any one, and he has contributed himself, both before and since his retirement, to edify us on this important point of contemporaneous history. The treaty was signed at Vienna on October 7th, 1879, and was shrouded in profound mystery. All the German Chancellor desired was that its object should be known, and that the St. Petersburg Cabinet should be thoroughly convinced that he had found what he wanted elsewhere. The reconciliation between Austria and Germany was looked upon at first without uneasiness; but it became matter for alarm in the Reichstag in 1888, when the Government solicited a further extraordinary credit for the requirements of the army. "So it is the war foreseen in connection with the arrangements made at Vienna?" said the members of Parliament. "No," replied Prince Bismarck, "the aim of the Treaty of Alliance is peace, but to place it beyond the possibility of being disturbed we must be in a position to impose it." He could see, however, that there would be violent resistance, and to avoid this

he decided to publish the Treaty uniting the two empires.[1]

In a work which is in course of publication as we write, *The German Empire in Bismarck's Time*, by Hans Blum, from whom we have already quoted, the author, relying on the confidences that have been bountifully poured out to him at Friedrichsruh, undertakes to give us a new version of the causes that separated Russia from Germany and gave rise to an understanding between the latter and Austria. He relates that by the terms of the Treaty of Berlin, an international commission was to assemble at Novi-Bazar to fix the boundaries of the frontiers of Turkey and the emancipated provinces. The Czar, in three successive letters, asked the Emperor William to authorise the German delegate to concert with his Russian colleague. "The assent of Berlin," the Emperor Alexander is stated to have said, "is the condition of the maintenance of peace between the two peoples." When Prince Bismarck was informed of these applications, he pointed out to his Sovereign that if *those words* had been in an official document, he would

[1] The Treaty signed in 1879 had been renewed in 1883 and 1887 ; Italy had acceded to it ; but Prince Bismarck only divulged the first in date, that of 1879, in which the signature of the Italian Government does not figure. Up to the present time nothing has transpired to explain how the two-fold understanding was converted into a three-fold one.

have been compelled to advise his Majesty to mobilise the German army. Unable to indulge in this advice, he left Gastein, where he then was, for Vienna, in order to acquaint the Austrian Cabinet of the communications made by the Czar to the Emperor William. Under what aspect did he present the matter, and how did he look at it himself? As the prelude or the revelation of an understanding that was imminent or had been concerted between France and Russia. "To the Franco-Russian Alliance," Count Andrassy, Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Emperor Francis Joseph, is stated to have replied, "There is but one counter-balance, it is the Austro-German alliance."

Thus, according to Prince Bismarck's new apologist, writing so to say, under his dictation, the paternity of the first treaty, which has since become that of the Triple Alliance, must be attributed to the initiative of the Austrian Minister. But Statesmen who seek to pen the history of their own times, however expert they be, are often exposed to rectifying themselves the errors they seek to prove. *Habent sua fata libelli.* "Count Andrassy," continues Hans Blum, "stated he was ready to put his signature to the Alliance, feeling certain of his Sovereign's consent. Prince Bismarck was not so sure of that of the Emperor William; they neverthe-

less drew out a draft, and the German Chancellor returned to Berlin on September 24th. The Treaty could not be signed until October 7th. The delay in concluding it is explained by the fact that the Emperor William would not, first of all, listen to anything on the subject of this Alliance. . . . It was only after long explanations that Prince Bismarck succeeded in obtaining his adhesion."

But what was Prince Bismarck's motive in repairing personally to Vienna, he who, since fortune had showered her favours on him, would not consent to engage in negotiations elsewhere than at Berlin? He went there with the intention of concerting with the Austrian Cabinet; he had announced to Count Andrassy by telegraph that such was his desire. Admitting that the Emperor Francis Joseph's Minister was the originator of the proposal, who suggested it to him? Who, moreover, imposed it on the German Emperor? Was it not his Chancellor, as Hans Blum avows, Prince Bismarck himself? Must the Chancellor's frame of mind on this occasion be attributed, as his historian seems to insinuate, to "that considerable nervous excitement which the use of the Gastein waters invariably produces"? That would be making great things depend on a very miserable circumstance. One understands Prince Bismarck doing all he can to extricate himself from an im-

plication which will assuredly be a stain upon his glory, but how can one fail to be surprised when one sees him have recourse to such mean proceedings to effect his object? He hurried off to Vienna to negotiate the union of Germany with Austria, and this initiative gave birth to the Alliance of the two Empires; he, therefore, is the author of it. Formerly he would have had the audacity to acknowledge this without beating about the bush; at present, feeling each day the weight of the responsibility he has assumed increasing, he tries to slip away. Such an attempt is unworthy of him. What, moreover, was the chief object of these thoughts at this moment? Against what adversary did he wish to arm and shelter the German Empire? Against Russia as much as against France. He had mortally wounded the first of these two Powers at the Berlin Congress; he could not disguise from himself that the injury would remain incurable, unless he acknowledged his faults, which was more than his excessive pride could bend to. And which of the two aggressors does he propose to master before the other? Is it France? She is not mentioned in the treaty of alliance. Russia, on the contrary, is named as the probable enemy of both contracting parties. "If one of the two Powers," it is stipulated in Article 1, "is attacked by Russia, they will reciprocally owe one another

the assistance of the totality of their military forces."

Now what had the Emperor Alexander asked his uncle, the Emperor William, who was under obligations to him? An understanding between their agents, entrusted in Turkey with the execution of certain clauses of the Berlin Treaty, so that the Russian representative, seconded by his German colleague, might obtain on the spot the attenuation of certain decisions come to at the Congress which were contrary to the interests or traditions of the Empire of the Czars in the East. What a magnificent opportunity Prince Bismarck had again this time of pleasing Russia and renewing the relations which were so seriously strained! Did he hasten to take advantage of it? He preferred to increase the gravity of a situation that was already extremely delicate; he rushed off to Vienna, there to forge new arms against the Empire that had rendered Germany such striking service in time of peril. Prince Bismarck's great and enlightened intelligence evidently, on this occasion, suffered the influence of his temperament. Morality, like justice, sooner or later recovers all its rights, and the President of the Berlin Congress, who placed his signature at the bottom of the Treaty of Vienna, will not succeed in escaping from the reproaches he has incurred. After having been the ardent instigator of three wars, after

having mutilated Denmark and France, blinded by pride, by his spirit of domination, he has hollowed out with his own hands an impassable chasm between Germany and Russia, and has caused these two great nations to feel implacable hatred for one another. By straying along this wrong road he has not merely damaged his own renown, he has also bequeathed to Europe a situation fraught with the greatest danger. That is what we shall endeavour to show.

## IV.

The prominent and visible feature in Prince Bismarck's character, as in his policy, is that his temperament invariably makes him go to extremes in everything, and resort to haughty or disdainful violence according to the occasion, according to the position or the authority enjoyed by the adversary in whose presence he may be. His letters dated from Frankfort, when still only a diplomatic agent, are bristling with bitter sarcasms directed against all the Confederate States, without excepting Austria. He estimated the value of his colleagues at the cost of the gold braid on their uniforms. There was twenty thousand thalers' worth, he writes, at a gala banquet. When he began his first struggle on coming to power, he affected to look with equal contempt on the King

of Denmark's rights to the Duchies, and the claims of the Pretenders, whose defence had been undertaken by the Frankfort Diet. He never forgave Count Beust for having upheld the sovereign prerogatives of the Confederate States; he urged the commander of the Army Corps selected to invade Saxony in 1866 to secure his person either at Dresden or Leipsic. At the conclusion of peace Count Beust had to take refuge in Austria. Prince Bismarck's resentment had survived his political adversary's defeat. Who has forgotten his brutal persecution of Count Arnim? The Chancellor thought the Republic in France would be a permanent source of trouble and disorder; the Ambassador, in spite of his chief's remonstrances, remained persuaded that it would be a serious danger to the principle of monarchy in Europe; he committed no other fault, and even now Prince Bismarck blackens his memory by refusing his victim's son to relieve it of a calumny that found origin in the interviews at Friedrichsruh. Herr M. Busch, collecting morning and night the effusions the Chancellor indulged in among his intimate friends during the French war, shows him constantly tormented with the necessity of injuring the invaded provinces. Prince Bismarck reproaches the military with being too lenient towards people and objects. They make too many prisoners, he said, and some of them, like the

Franc-Tireurs and Turcos, should have been mercilessly shot. The misery of the peasantry seeking refuge in the woods does not affect him in the least. "If the fugitives fell into my hands," he added, "I would take their cows and all they possess, accusing them of having stolen the things." What a strange doctrine on the lips of a Statesman! We could quote a cruel, pitiless expression, which lays the Iron Chancellor's soul bare. We abstain from doing so because he attributes it to Princess Bismarck. We prefer to refer the reader to Herr Busch's curious volume.[1]

His propensities undergo no modification at the conclusion of peace. He anxiously watches France, whose ruin was not sufficiently complete to suit him. We have seen how he was thirsting to spring on her again as soon as he had reason to fear she would soon be herself again. Russia places an obstacle in the way of his schemes, she dares brave him, he at once turns his anger and resentment against her. He humbles her at Berlin, he concludes a treaty at Vienna which is especially aimed at the Northern Empire.

It is an error, says Prince Bismarck, to regard the alliance of Germany and Austria exclusively in the light of an arrangement in view of war; it has but one object, the maintenance of peace;

[1] *Le Comte de Bismarck et sa suite pendant la guerre de France*, p. 195. Paris.

it is to ensure peace to Europe that this union has been concluded and signed. War, he adds at the interviews, that echo at his will, has given us all we could expect; it could only expose the advantages we have acquired and to strengthen which we require peace. But if the repose of the world, he was answered, were the Chancellor's sole care, why did he not exert all his efforts to tighten certain very old ties from which he had reaped marvellous benefit? With Russia satisfied, after the war with Turkey, Germany all-powerful in the centre of the Continent, what dangers could there be to threaten universal peace? Would not an understanding between these two Powers have been the best and firmest guarantee for its preservation? Prince Bismarck preferred a rupture which was certainly not what his sovereign intended; he is therefore the responsible author of it, as we cannot too frequently repeat. But he had foreseen the consequences of his action and hastened to provide for the obligations it imposed on Germany. That was the sole object of the reconciliation he forced on the Emperor William as much as on the Emperor Francis Joseph. Consequently it was not the repose of Europe that troubled him and took him to Vienna, it was the security of the German Empire.

In reality he was taking up a position for conflicts rendered eventual if not imminent in the

north of Europe, by the attitude he had himself assumed in regard to Russia, by the duties he forced on that Power when dispossessing her of her influence on the Danube, of the advantages she had conquered, during a sanguinary war, at the cost of the greatest sacrifices. It was thus that he sowed the germs of a permanent misunderstanding that have developed more rapidly than he anticipated and the fruits of which he can already judge of from the innermost recesses of his retreat. Competent to form a judicious opinion in such a matter, he was not long in perceiving the difficulties he had created for his country, and he wished to make a display of different feelings to Russia. "I have been able to convince myself," he said in the Reichstag, in a speech from which we have already quoted a few words, "that the Emperor Alexander had neither warlike tendencies against us, nor the intention of attacking us, nor a leaning towards aggressive wars in general . . . . I trust, I believe in the Czar's word . . . . we shall exert ourselves to respect the rights that Russia takes from treaties . . . . and if she asks us to support her applications to the Sultan to bring back the Bulgarians to the position created by the understanding of the Powers, I shall not hesitate to do so." He spoke thus in 1888, without fear, in holding this language, to give, an emphatic contradiction himself to all

his recent acts, notably to his conduct at the Berlin Congress and to the precipitation with which he had concluded the treaty that still unites Germany to Austria. The fact is, he had understood and measured the extent of the two-fold mistake he had made, and felt all the weight of the responsibility he had assumed. This has ever since been present in his mind; and in his retreat, he has never ceased to pretend that he had left the relations between Germany and Russia in a satisfactory state which permitted of their former cordiality being restored to them. But new and striking incidents have occurred which have proved how unfounded this assurance and prevision were. Russia has drawn nearer to France, and Prince Bismarck, far from accusing himself, attacks his successor. He has allowed the flatterers who visit him to hear the reproaches he addresses to General Caprivi, so that they may repeat them.

Prince Bismarck has convinced no one, and the judgment of his contemporaries will be that of posterity. Of what, indeed, does the Treaty of Alliance which he concluded at Vienna consist? Is it a pledge of peace? No one could suggest such a thing, for it is on the contrary an act drawn up in view of war. What does it provide for? Fresh hostilities, and the two contracting parties to it stipulate the mutual

assistance they shall be under the obligation of lending to one another when it breaks out. Such clauses might, in a certain measure, have been justifiable, had they been drawn out solely in view of aggression on the part of France. The peace signed at Frankfort had left gaping wounds, and it might be presumed that they could only be cicatrised by vengeance. But in 1879 Russia had as yet taken no initiative, no step revealing an unkindly attitude or invincible resentment. We have pointed out that Prince Bismarck could on more than one occasion have approached the Russian Government, making a sacrifice of his rancour, and the Emperor William would certainly not have placed any obstacle in the way of his doing so; he preferred on the contrary to keep it definitely at a distance by seeking the co-operation at Vienna which he had so long found at St. Petersburg. The rupture between the Northern Empires is therefore his personal work. That is what we desired to show.

But how was it Austria lent herself to engagements which increased the height of the barrier already separating her from Russia? Austria has interests of the first order on the Danube. Expelled from Germany, where she had exercised influence from times immemorial, she had suffered a dethronement which gave a serious

blow to her credit among the population in the Balkan peninsula. This position, bad as it was then, was increased in gravity after the Treaty of San Stefano, by the preponderance it gave Russia in the East. The Cabinet of Vienna could not therefore hesitate to join in the views of those of Berlin and London, and become their confederate. They offered her Bosnia and Herzegovina as the price of her participation. These acquisitions compensated Austria for the sacrifices that had been imposed on her in 1866, by giving her a new and larger base of action on her Eastern frontier. Once in possession of these two provinces, the road to Salonica was open to her; she relies on inheriting that port at the next division of the territory Turkey still possesses in Europe and thus acquiring direct access to the Ægean Sea. The bait was tempting; we have already said she took it. But from that time she became the principal instrument of Prince Bismarck's policy, and she could not conceal from herself that she would be under the necessity of following him as far as he chose to lead her. The Treaty of Alliance was in germ when the arrangements were made at Berlin, and the Vienna Cabinet was certainly resigned to giving its signature whenever the German Chancellor considered it opportune to conclude. They were aware, besides, at Vienna of the

facility with which Prince Bismarck performed evolutions on diplomatic as on parliamentary ground, and they were sure that, if repelled by Austria, he would turn again towards Russia. Count Andrassy was all the more justified in that presumption as the German Chancellor was able to inform him, at their first meeting, of the communications the Emperor Alexander had made to the Emperor William and which could have been taken advantage of to renew the relations that had been broken off. Nor was the Minister of the Emperor Francis Joseph unaware that the Emperor William regretted the dissent existing between his Government and that of his imperial nephew, and that it was his desire "to die like the expiring sun," after having shone with such splendid fire. We have seen Prince Bismarck's account of the efforts he had to make to persuade his Sovereign to ratify the treaty of 1879. Austria, being responsible with Germany for the mischief done to Russia, had fatally to accept all the consequences; she had placed herself in the necessity of acquiescing in a treaty which nevertheless presented all the character of an act of defiance and even of hostility against a powerful Empire which had given neither of the contracting parties any cause for alarm. This was a first expiation of the crime she had been guilty of in consenting to receive the

spoils of Turkey, dismembered by the Powers who should have defended her. Such is the fate of all territory graspers, when their acquisitions repose on neither right nor justice; and for the space of nearly fifteen years since she has in this way lost her liberty of action, she has borne the weight, becoming heavier and heavier each day, of the duties she has had to assume. But, we repeat, that Austria, in 1879, had no choice in coming to a decision; she acted in obedience to an influence for which she was quite prepared.

## V.

The Statesman entrusted with the interests of a great country who knows he has served them badly displays uneasiness in proportion to the measure of his faults. That was Prince Bismarck's frame of mind after the Berlin Congress. His penetrating perspicacity, and particularly his sure foresight, which had never deceived him before 1870, did not permit of his making any mistake in regard to the dangers of the new line of policy to which the errors of his pride had led him. He therefore had but one thought, that of averting them. He had ensured the alliance of Austria; he considered it insufficient; he sought that of Italy; he obtained it by arousing her alarm and

flattering her passions. He had applied himself to bringing on a conflict in connection with our occupation of Tunis, which he had prepared a long time before, and had been careful to foment. After encouraging our enterprise, he pointed it out to Rome as a permanent peril for the young kingdom. No one will be surprised that Prince Bismarck should have thus understood German interests; but that Italy, a new State, in the midst of organisation, should have consented to divest herself of her liberty of action by assuming obligations that nothing compelled her to contract, was what no one could understand, however careful the Italian Government may have been to justify so grave a resolution. To form a correct opinion of her conduct, it would really be necessary to know the terms of the act she signed, that is to say, the extent and nature of the duties it imposes on her. Germany and Austria have informed all Europe of the treaty binding them, notwithstanding that it contains a stipulation providing for an understanding that is directly aimed at Russia, and notwithstanding that she is explicitly named therein. The document devoted to Italy's association in their alliance is and continues a secret which is obstinately preserved. Let us note, by the way, that contrary to all real principles of parliamentary government, the Italian Chambers have never been vouchsafed any knowledge of it,

although its particular object is to pledge all the forces and resources of the country. Notwithstanding the most energetic efforts of certain fractions of Parliament it has been impossible to overcome this obstinate obmutescence; the crown and Government are covered by the constitution, which is imperfect on this important point. What is not less worthy of remark is that the members of the Chamber, who had warmly protested against this constitutional anomaly, maintained the same silence as their predecessors as soon as they came to power; this was notably the case with Signor Crispi. Secrecy on this point seems to have been a condition on accepting office. Who imposed it on them? Evidently the Sovereign. Who exacted that it should be so? Was it Germany, or was it the character and importance of the clauses binding Italy to the two Empires, that caused this course to be adopted?

It would be rash to seek to fathom the import of these stipulations; we should run the risk of forming conjectures which would in any case be without authority. But it is quite permissible to believe that the fact of Italy entering into the Triple Alliance led the contracting parties to concert in regard to all the contingencies that may compel France to appear upon the scene; that they have, at least, mutually guaranteed their territorial position; and that military arrange-

ments have been elaborated in that view. If Austria therefore has consented to aid Germany against Russia, Italy, who could only be of relative assistance to them in a conflict with the Northern Empire, has intervened, on her side, to unite with the two allies against France. It is impossible to attribute any other object to this three-fold understanding.

What reasons, what requirements, could have influenced Italy in striking out such a novel line of policy and one so contrary to all her traditions? As a matter of fact, what is the Triple Alliance? A sort of Holy Alliance renewed, minus Russia and plus Italy, which has been concluded to keep the Alsatians and Lorrains in bondage on the one hand, and on the other the Italians who are still under Austrian rule. King Victor Emmanuel would never have lent his hand to such a combination, imitated from that which so long weighed on the peninsula and from which he had the glory of freeing himself with French aid. Count Cavour must start in his tomb with indignation. We should point out that long before the date of the engagements contracted by Italy, there had been a notable deviation in the policy of the Cabinet of Rome. The contagion of democratic institutions had alarmed the Conservatives who were then in power. The most prominent men among them, who until then had only known the road to Paris, took,

one after the other, that of Berlin; it did not suffice for them to separate from a Republic that had adherents on the other side of the Alps, they required the support of powerful monarchies, and it was in their minds that the principle of a hostile alliance to France germinated. It was necessary to justify these tendencies, which were repudiated at the time by all the men who had fought for independence, who had suffered exile and imprisonment. We were credited with the firm intention of exercising an influence in Italy outrageous for her dignity and the rank she henceforth had the right to claim among the Great Powers. Public opinion was irritated by speeches, by the press remunerated in part from the reptilian fund—Minghetti acknowledged it in one of his letters—and by persistent insinuations. The Tunis affair cropped up; it was a premeditated incident in regard to which a great deal of fuss was made in order to embitter the public mind, the French Government being accused of a vast number of misdeeds of which they had never even thought, and notably that of maintaining too intimate a connection with the Vatican and encouraging its hopes. They thus succeeded in creating an expression of opinion which gradually spread over all the provinces of the peninsula. At the same time Count Robilant, an Italian diplomatist, leader of the Conservatives, prepared the ground at

Vienna, where he was accredited as ambassador. He was encouraged by his friends at Rome and adequately supported by Prince Bismarck.

Victor Emmanuel, with his prudent character and clear foresight, was careful to check the errors and warmth of this agitation from the commencement. He was able to restrain the zeal and impatience of such of his advisers as lent an ear to Prince Bismarck's fallacious insinuations. Without forgetting services rendered, without rejecting those that were promised, he wounded neither his friends of yesterday nor those of the morrow; he, awaiting events, resolved to take counsel from circumstances only. He died in 1878, leaving matters in this state, without having contracted any engagement, without having discontented either France or Germany. Italy soon acceded to the Austro-German treaty; this was the first important act of the new reign, and it revealed a different and well-defined policy. There can be no doubt that King Humbert I. is a fervent apostle of this attitude of Italy, and in saying so we do not think we are making a statement likely to displease him. Nothing, indeed, is further from our thoughts than the intention of giving utterance to any assertion calculated to wound the Sovereign of a country to which we have been, to which we are convinced we shall, before long be, closely united. But when one

examines such grave events, the first duty is to endeavour to fathom, to define the feelings of those who participated in them, be they Princes or Ministers. We have seen that the Italian constitution gives the Sovereign a large share in directing and controlling the relations of the Kingdom with the other Powers. He can, as we have said, conclude treaties with them in view of war, without being compelled to have his engagements ratified by the Chambers, without being obliged even to inform them of what he has done. So that the country is actually pledged in certain contingencies to unsheathe the sword without knowing the causes or necessities that have compelled or constrained the King and his Government to take such an important decision, or the extent of the sacrifices it may have to make.

That is parliamentary government as they understand it in Germany, and not as practised in countries gifted with a Constitution founded on sound principles as in England. However irresponsible a Prince may be, he evidently, under such circumstances, assumes a personal responsibility both towards his own subjects and towards the countries who will benefit or suffer from the obligations he has contracted. But the Ministers, it will be said, are answerable for the Sovereign's acts in this case as in others. Such

is the theory; reality is different, as shown in the present instance. Ministers come and go, the King remains; and the treaty, always shrouded in the mystery of secrecy, is renewed. What indicates, moreover, that the King's will is asserted in this matter with exceptional and overbearing authority, that it is impossible to regard its existence in the light of pure fiction, is, that we have seen men of considerable standing in the Italian Parliament, who, after having violently protested against the engagements entered into by the two Empires, have warmly approved of them on becoming Ministers, and have shown themselves their earnest safeguards; disavowing the opinion they had expressed on the benches of the Opposition, they have adopted that of the King as soon as they have found seats among his advisers. "You have made yourselves the gendarmes of Germany," exclaimed Signor Crispi, when simply deputy, to Depretis and his colleagues, reproaching them with having so criminally implicated Italy's signature. On being appointed Prime Minister he revealed himself the impassioned champion of the acts of his predecessors. When a democrat, an Irredentist like himself, performs such a strange evolution, one has a right to think, without wounding any one's dignity, that King Humbert only accords confidence to and admits into his councils

men who consent to share his opinion as to the desirability of continuing the relations established with Germany and Austria. When the Marquis Rudini succeeded Signor Crispi his attitude was more circumspect; a few months after he became President of the Council he renewed the Treaty which had still nearly two years to run.

The successor of the *galantuomo* King, on ascending the throne, considered it opportune, in the interest of his country, to deviate from the line traced out by his father; and, finding inspiration in the traditions of his race, preferred taking King Victor Amadeus II., one of the most illustrious of his ancestors, as model and guide for his conduct. The policy of the house of Savoy has always had two poles, the King and the Emperor, one at Paris, the other at Vienna. The skill this dynasty has displayed has consisted in abandoning one for the other without exposure and with profit. Victor Amadeus, from the origin of the war of 1688 to the commencement of his reign, had assured Louis XIV. that in "this encounter he could absolutely rely on him." He was not sincere. He was resolved on the contrary to go against France, "reserving the choice of the moment to take action." He, indeed, wrote to the Prince of Orange and opened his heart to him; he entered into negotiations with the Emperor whilst waiting to accede to

the Augsburg League. The King of France, informed of these intrigues, demanded guarantees; his troops were allowed to enter Piedmont. That pledge being subsequently considered insufficient, he required the citadel of Turin to be handed over to him. Victor Amadeus was able to delay this concession by means of dilatory negotiations, and by writing an autographic letter to the King by which he declared he placed himself absolutely in his hands, and undertook to give up the citadel as had been demanded. But when he had placed the fortress in a state of defence he threw the gates open to the Spaniards who had come from Milan, where he had signed an offensive and defensive alliance the day before with the Emperor and Spain, thus accomplishing his first plans and his evolution. But this Prince "so keen, so dissembling, and so artful"[1] was such, that he had hardly entered the coalition, than he was already preparing an exit. Indeed he did leave it, after long discussions and signing new treaties with France, which made him Commander-in-chief of the troops of the League in Italy and Commander-in-chief of the Franco-Piedmontese troops. His first allies had promised him Provence and Dauphiné; on becoming reconciled to Louis XIV., he considered it prudent to be satisfied with the restitution of

[1] Letter from Catinat to Louvois.

Pignerol, some territory in the Milanese, and the title of King, honours of crowned heads, as they said in those times.[1]

We will not continue this historical page, instructive though it be, and though it be illustrated at a later date by the same underhand dealings and the same artfulness. We have paused at it for an instant under the impression that the past always serves to enlighten the future. However, our only object has been to place certain circumstances and facts side by side; they are not absolutely devoid of analogy, notwithstanding that the times and positions are different. To our mind they differ particularly in regard to the interests at stake. Victor Amadeus feared the ambition of Louis XIV., and he had reason to do so. France, by possessing Pignerol, had already one foot in Italy, and the King, victorious over the League, might put forward other claims. What danger threatened Italy in 1882, and what had she to fear from France, vanquished and mutilated? France at that date, at the time when the peninsula became associated with the two Empires, was hardly rising from the prostrate position in which an unfortunate war had placed her; she had absolute need of peace to reorganise her armament, to equilibriate her finances. What

[1] We have taken this brief summary from *L'Histoire de Louvois*, by Camille Rousset. *See* chaps. xi. and following.

had she to claim from Italy, what territory, what concession? She asked her solely to tighten the economic connection between the two countries, which was profitable alike to the commerce and industry of both. It has never been seriously maintained at Rome that the Republic premeditated restoring the temporal power of the Pope. Such an accusation would have been ridiculous and would have aroused public conscience in Europe. Gambetta, in a rebuke which was perhaps more severe than he intended, had given a pledge which did not allow of suspicion being attached to the intentions of the men who had taken over the government of the country with him. Italy, thanks to that luck which had so prodigiously assisted her, was at that time in possession of all the guarantees for her security she could desire. France and Germany's own interests compelled them to watch over the independence of the peninsula; King Humbert's Government was certain of the support and co-operation of both Powers in all contingencies that could happen. No more advantageous international position could have been imagined for a budding State obliged to look after its prosperity at home and develop all its resources.

Therefore, there was no need at Rome to renounce the happy neutrality which the respective

positions imposed on the belligerents of 1870 by peace enabled her to observe. They departed from it notwithstanding, and their resolution to do so had to be justified. What did they pretend? That the Italian kingdom, being of recent creation, must contract alliances for the defence of her frontiers. The argument was not a serious one; Signor Crispi, however, has never advanced any other to his adversaries, to the patriots who have remained faithful to the convictions he formerly shared with them. But, they answered him, who is threatening our frontiers? where is the peril? Vain efforts; he showed himself no more disposed to enlighten members of Parliament alarmed at Italy's new friendships than Depretis had been. Signor Crispi on attaining power, had had the Treaty of Alliance placed in his hands: did this mysterious document impose silence on him, against his wish, as it had done on those who concluded it? It therefore contains certain stipulations calculated to bring about the most unlikely conversions. But if its ostensible object is to guarantee the possession of provinces of Italian origin to Austria, those of Alsace-Lorraine to Germany, it must ensure Italy compensative advantages. One can hardly imagine Signor Crispi, in his turn, making himself the gendarme of the former rulers of his country without some future remuneration. He always has had, and certainly

still has, the most lofty ambition. What then are the new hopes he is fostering? Can they be those he conceived as soon as the clauses of the treaty came to his knowledge? As they are concealed must one take them to be inavowable? And to the prejudice of what neighbour are they to be realised? It cannot be of Austria, the enemy of yesterday, the ally of to-day; it must therefore be of France, and, renouncing to satisfy Italy's ambition in the Alps or in the Adriatic, they propose to ensure its triumph in the Mediterranean. If that be so we were not mistaken in evoking the insidious proceedings of King Victor Amadeus, and in recalling the use he made of them. One can understand that Prince Bismarck, separating in anger from Russia, should have sought the alliance of Austria; one can also understand that the latter, redoubting a reconciliation that is always possible between the two Empires of the North, should have united with Germany. Neither at Berlin nor at Vienna was there any concealment. Strange though it appeared to inform a Great Power that arrangements had been made to fight it if occasion offered, those who did so, had the courage to own and make the engagements they had contracted public. Why does not Italy follow this example which is wanting neither in audacity nor magnanimity? Is it because she cannot confess all without revealing perfidious

and ambitious views that would justify every kind of suspicion?

## VI.

But it is not war, they never cease to repeat, that the Triple Alliance seeks; it is peace, which they propose to maintain by placing it beyond the possibility of being troubled. Signor Crispi has himself affirmed it; his behaviour during his first tenure of office was but one long contradiction of his own words. His every act was a provocation, and it was no fault of his if the dissensions he provoked did not degenerate into a rupture or a resort to arms. The prudent and dignified attitude of the Government of the Republic frustrated all the Italian Minister's calculations. It must however be acknowledged that Signor Crispi was not supported, and he was perhaps not encouraged, by the Cabinets of Vienna and Berlin, and it is easy to understand and explain this first disagreement between the three allied Courts. Signor Crispi, being a sound-minded man, soon formed a correct idea of the consequences the heavy burden imposed on his country by her understanding with her allies would fatally have for her at no distant date; he understood how urgently necessary was a prompt, an immediate solution. To the shame of financial discomfort, and its

consequences, he preferred war, which alone could give Italy the advantages she hoped to obtain for the sacrifices she was obliged to make. But if Italy had entered the Triple Alliance for future and contingent profit, the two Empires had on the contrary already received theirs, and peace ensured them its possession. That was what neither the first negotiators of King Humbert nor the Sovereign himself understood when they entered into engagements at Vienna. All Signor Crispi's efforts have met with failure in presence of the calm attitude of France, and more particularly so in face of the private and distinctly defined interests of the two other allies whose satellite Italy has made herself and continues to be.

Let us say, then, that peace, with or without Italy's consent, was the sole, the real object the negotiators of the Triple Alliance had in view from the commencement, and let us see if this diplomatic conception offers adequate guarantees for the repose of Europe. Political writers of every order and every country have examined it under all its aspects ; some have blamed, others have applauded it ; the former have denounced it as a permanent danger, the others have considered it a pledge of high value. There is not one at the present day, wishing to be of good faith, who does not concede that the peace of the

Triple Alliance, is armed peace, that it is Europe under arms, ever ready for the struggle, and that this catastrophe may burst out suddenly, through incidents independent of the will of the various Governments. This peril becomes daily more apparent, and no one is any longer in doubt on the subject. Preparations are being made on all sides, and there is no sacrifice one dares recede from. Parliament never reassembles without being asked to vote further credits for the army and to increase the imposts already so heavy for the taxpayers of all countries. Military service, having become everywhere obligatory, is imposed on all, up to the age of forty-five ; some amongst us who are still liable to be called out are grandfathers. Germany, which possesses the most formidable armament yet known, has just this very year increased her effective in a notable proportion, drawing the meshes of her organisation closer, so that none can escape the duty of assembling round the flag.

What think they in Germany of the peace Prince Bismarck, on retiring from power, has bequeathed to Europe? How does the Imperial Government itself regard it? It considers it a truce, and that there is only just time to arrange everything for the next war which will, according to the words of the new Chancellor, be "a battle for life." To convince one's self, it suffices to

peruse the speech that General Caprivi delivered to uphold and justify his last Army Bill tending to increase the effectives and granting Government the necessary credits for that purpose. He had to give an explanation, to convince Parliament of the requirements it was urgent to provide for, and he performed his task with absolute frankness. His speech was in a measure a plan of campaign. "When we crossed the frontier of France in 1870," he said, "we did so with seventeen Army Corps. . . . Whereas only eight Army Corps were opposed to us. . . . In the future war," General Caprivi continued, reasoning as if war would break out immediately, "we shall find French Army Corps before us, at least as numerous as those we shall place in line. We shall find, moreover, an Army of Reserve of about the same value as the Army in the first line. But admitting we cross the frontier, that we are victorious, what shall we find in France? A line of forts . . . on the Meuse and Moselle . . . then behind we shall come to the series of great French fortresses: Verdun, Toul, Epinal. We advance, however, and fight the French Army of Reserve; we proceed to Paris, but it is no longer the Paris of 1870; we are before a stronghold such as the world has never seen, surrounded by fifty-six forts." General Caprivi, in speaking thus, did not intend to point out only

the obstacles that it would be necessary to overcome in the next campaign, obstacles that require new and more powerful means to be employed in dealing with them than were at hand in 1870; he at the same time gave a rejoinder to an opinion which is sufficiently popular in Germany for him to consider it necessary to oppose it at the tribune of the Reichstag. What does this opinion want? It advocates a *preventive* war, that is to say, an immediate conflict to reduce France to lasting impotence before she has given all the development to her military forces they still require; the war, in fact, that Prince Bismarck and Count Moltke wished for in 1875. The fact is worth noting, and it is beyond denial, because the Chancellor of the Empire himself acknowledged and established it. It was not superfluous to call attention to it, because it shows that on the other side of the frontier, in the German army especially, they incline to the view that the sole solution of present difficulties lies in war at an early date, whilst they loudly accuse France of watching passionately for the opportunity to take revenge.

What has France done to provoke such war-like impatience? What has been her attitude? What line of conduct has she adopted? The Chancellor has indicated this himself in the remarks we have just quoted. France has given

all her care to placing herself on a proper footing of defence. But defence, unless one distorts the value of words and the truth of facts, has never been offence, and less still an act of aggression. What has Germany done in the same order of ideas, how have her allies proceeded, what measures have been taken by all the European States, large and small? They have armed, they have daily given greater extension to their military strength. Prince Bismarck, previous to General von Caprivi, exacted grants of money from the Reichstag, for military purposes which were several times renewed; to obtain these grants both had recourse to the dissolution of Parliament; the expedient was assuredly constitutional, but it proves the importance of the sacrifices imposed on the country and the pressure the Imperial Government had to exercise on the national vote to get the grants passed. England, even, that land of poised minds, does not escape the general contagion. A few years back, in 1889, Parliament voted an extraordinary credit of five hundred millions of francs, which were to be employed exclusively on new armour-plated vessels, apart from what was provided in the budget. The totality of the sum has not yet been spent, and public opinion is already in alarm on the other side of the Straits because a Russian squadron has entered the Mediterranean,

and the Government is urged to apply to Parliament for another credit of the same importance. Did France provoke all these armaments? Could they exact from her that she should leave all her gates open without defence? What they had a right to expect from her was that she would avoid all subjects for quarrel, that she would lend herself to any arrangement to prevent dangerous complications; she has conformed to that attitude with a moderation that was not devoid of dignity; she has shown this on several occasions, particularly in her intercourse with Italy during Signor Crispi's first ministry. She has been occupied entirely in sheltering her territory from all danger, and has persevered in that task with great prudence, from which she has never departed, and at the cost of a public debt which exceeds that of any other Power, the heaviest that a nation has yet been called upon to support. She has braved no one; she has reflected, and she has hesitated at no sacrifice her own dignity and the security of the country commanded her to make. Does that convey the meaning that she has ceased to feel the mutilation she has undergone, that all is forgotten? It would be an insult to her to think so. But she, like all other countries, feels the weight of the burdens she has had to be content to bear in order to recover herself, and she considers that peace is still, for

her, the best of all remedies; she ardently desires to preserve it, leaving the task of curing an ill from which all Europe is suffering, as she is, to time and the wisdom of Governments.

Have we any need to say that the Triple Alliance, which is the cause of this deplorable situation, has been a source of difficulties for the Powers that formed it, such as they had never yet known? General von Moltke is stated to have observed that the acquisition of Metz was equal to an army of a hundred thousand men to Germany; and that argument settled the fate of the fortress, it is added. It is well known at the present day that Germany's aggrandisements on the left bank of the Rhine cost the Empire more than they yield her in finances and security. They necessitate continual development of her military forces and a proportional increase in her expenses. The famous Marshal's prediction has turned against him. A member of the Reichstag affirmed some time back, without meeting with contradiction, that in 1879 five to six marks a head were paid in indirect taxes; owing to the growth of taxation the amount is now fourteen marks, that is to say, it has doubled in twelve years. The last military law, following on to so many others, will raise the peace contingent by 63,000 men, but it will burden the country with a further outlay of sixty million marks. Let us mention, moreover, that the French war budget

for the present year[1] has been fixed at six hundred and thirty-three million francs: if the calculations that have been made in this respect, and which we have not been able to check, are correct,[2] the German budget will attain eight hundred and seventy-nine millions. The budget of the Empire comprises revenues of different kinds among its receipts, such as the produce of the customs, the railways, and telegraphs. But Prince Bismarck, foreseeing that these resources would always be insufficient, introduced an ingenious clause into the Constitution, thanks to which the Imperial budget can never be in default. It sets forth, in fact, that in case a deficit occurs it shall be met by all the Confederate States in proportion to their respective populations. No limit is placed to this contribution, termed matriculated, which is thus of boundless elasticity. In 1879–1880 it was fixed at ninety million marks; ten years later, in 1889–1890, it rose to two hundred and twenty-eight; for the current financial year, 1893–1894, it is three hundred and eighty-six million marks.

[1] 1894.—*Translator*.

[2] See some comparative tables prepared by M. Jules Roche, former minister, and published in the newspaper *Le Matin*. It is noticeable that our military budget in 1886 exceeded that of Germany by a hundred millions. These figures show what sacrifices are being constantly made on the other side of the Rhine. According to M. Roche, several items should be deducted from the French budget, such as the Gendarmery which, in Germany, figures in the budget of the Minister of the Interior.

It has, therefore, been quadrupled in fourteen years, and this increase is almost entirely due to additional outlay in the War Department. We could quote other figures in this same order of ideas; those we give abundantly suffice for the purpose of forming an opinion on the result of the policy imposed by Prince Bismarck on Germany. Austria applied herself to the performance of her duties with circumspection worthy of commendation, but in doing so she did not forget her financial position. She followed Germany, but at a slower pace, without displaying an ambition to do things as well or on so large a scale as she did. She does not conceal, however, that she has attained the utmost limit of her resources, and there is a feeling at Vienna that if these efforts have to be continued much longer they will be attended with inevitable embarrassment to the Government of the Emperor Francis Joseph. To this natural uneasiness are joined the differences of the various nationalities forming the Austro-Hungarian Empire, differences which exaggerated taxation and compulsory military service have worked up into a state of exasperation. But whilst Austria has been strictly performing her duties as an ally of Germany, she has taken particular care to keep up relations which she applied herself to render easy and even cordial with all the Powers, especially Russia. And so she has

borne the burdens she has imposed on herself without showing visible signs of distress, and no disagreement of a bitter nature separates her from other countries.

What a pity we cannot say the same of Italy! That noble country, the cradle of our civilisation, had found a sister nation who, extending her a friendly hand, had assisted her to cast off all foreign yoke, and to put an end to the painful position of being divided into many States, which dated back from centuries. Italy under the guidance of a skilful and clear-headed Prince, aided by enlightened and patriotic advisers, had completed her resuscitation with a success that had surpassed all expectations. The problem was solved. To bring her enfranchisement to a glorious issue, she had been obliged at the commencement to contract loans, and in a measure to discount the future; she had been compelled to have recourse to paper money and obligatory currency. Her budgets in early years showed deficits. By the Sovereign's prudence and the skill of his Ministers all these difficulties had been mastered, the country freed from onerous expedients; and the liquidation of the financial law at last showed a surplus, when new men having grasped the reins of power embarked the kingdom in the Triple Alliance adventure. We have no need to relate what ensued. No

one moreover, can be mistaken, in the painful sight that Italy now presents to astounded Europe. What could we add to Signor Crispi's avowals on returning to power? "Italy's position is grave," he said, "more grave than it ever has been." What shows him to be thoroughly sincere, this time, is the proposal, or rather the prayer *ad misericordiam*, which he addressed to the representatives of the people to abdicate all authority, all control, in his favour. "The difficulties we have to overcome," he added, "are considerable, and to raise our credit, reorganise the finances, assert the authority of the law, and give the country confidence *again*, we require the co-operation of the Chamber without distinction of parties. In that view we ask you for the truce of God." That is to say, to vote what Signor Crispi considers the most advantageous without inquiring into the subject and without discussion. At no period has the Prime Minister of a constitutionally governed country been heard to hold such strange language. It is not merely a question of the deficit increasing and of those in authority at Rome being in doubt as to the possibility of meeting the requirments of all the departments of State; the country is also excited and full of anxiety. The association of the *fasci* in Sicily violently assails the fisc which is obliged to persecute the tax-payers, and this movement

spreads into the provinces round Naples and Rome, also weighed down by excessive taxation. It is easy to conceive that Signor Crispi has recourse to extraordinary and unconstitutional expedients.

To whom or what does Italy owe this painful state of things? Evidently to the Triple Alliance, to Prince Bismarck's work, which has been equally disastrous to all the European continent as well as to present and future generations. To arm is no small matter; armaments mean outlay; those who raise the largest contingents, who manufacture new cannon or build armoured ships of greater size, must pay for them; and this constant progression, with the discoveries of modern science laughing at established security, no longer knows any limit. It drags along with it the progression of the budgets, which already at the present moment exceed the normal resources of all the various States. And not only do these requirements absorb the revenues, they hinder national labour, the development of industry, of agriculture, and paralyze commerce; they engender misery and discontent; they thus trouble order at home and threaten international peace. It would be childish to conceal from one's self that military service, obligatory for all, imposing on the Governments the duty of diverting a large portion of the public revenue to form new battalions and

new fleets instead of using it for the welfare and relief of the people, has, on the other hand caused or facilitated the propagation of doctrines subversive of all social order. And this calamity of a new kind is becoming more serious and is spreading everywhere. Formerly we only knew of socialists; we are now in presence of anarchists and the "countryless" are announced. A short time ago these doctrines were followed by only a few adepts; they now have representatives in all the Assemblies, and the numbers increase each time parliament is renewed. This is an unshaken fact in Germany; it has just asserted itself in France. Thus the flood rises without end, that of public burdens as that of ideas tending to the destruction of all society.

There is the peace Prince Bismarck has wished to guarantee to Europe; there are its bitter fruits. It puts the old world in presence of two alternatives — misery or war; unless it leads it to another catastrophe which is none the less redoubtable — social strife. In presence of facts of which we are all witnesses no one is justified in lulling himself with the illusion that each country in Europe can indefinitely raise its taxes; such however, is the obligation which the involuntary hermit of Friedrichsruh has imposed on all of them. This is compulsory ruin at a date more or less distant. Italy's fate bears irrefutable testimony to it, and

that is what is fatally reserved to all other countries. Each will delay the settling day in proportion to the extent of its national wealth, but none have the certainty of indefinitely escaping it. It will be the war of guineas, as Prince Bismarck remarked with that humouristic wit which is one of his distinguishing characteristics. But when the store is exhausted, with what reserves will they manufacture this new kind of projectile? Let us be serious, and acknowledge that science, by a mockery of fate, herself sterilises, so to say, all the sacrifices that are made to place and keep the military forces on a proper footing, by rendering it necessary, through fresh discoveries, to be constantly renewing them. By increasing sometimes the resisting power of the armour plates, sometimes the penetrating power of the projectiles or else the range of the rifle or field piece, she renders the outlay of yesterday on her own indications, useless to-morrow.[1] No one therefore can uphold the theory that the day will come when it will be possible to pull up on this slippery and never-ending slope. Europe is con-

[1] Formerly it did not cost three million francs (£120,000) to build a large frigate of the line armed with one hundred and twenty cannon. The last ironclads that have been launched have been built at an outlay of twenty-seven million francs. There are some on the stocks that will cost thirty million francs. Formerly we were obliged to keep an armament for an army of 500,000 men in our arsenals; at the present day we must keep up an armament for four millions of men.

demned to drag herself along there until worn out, until the revolt of public conscience which will prefer the supreme struggle, the battle for life as General Caprivi expressed himself, to ruin and misery. That is armed peace, there are the consequences of it, there is where the personal policy of Prince Bismarck has led the whole of Europe, people and Governments alike!

This redoubtable calamity is happily not imminent. A new and providential occurrence places a barrier in the way, the understanding between France and Russia, the sole benefit we owe to Prince Bismarck. These two Powers, against whom the Triple Alliance was directed, now closely united, guarantee an honourable peace to Europe. No one can suspect the feelings of the Emperor Alexander III. The new Chancellor of the German Empire paid striking homage to their sincerity in one of his recent speeches. With less warmth, but equal good faith, we believe, he recognised that the Republic cherished the same sentiments. The telegrams the Czar and M. Carnot exchanged at the time of the departure of the Russian fleet from Toulon conveyed the same impression to the mind of every one. No aggression to fear on either hand. Let us hasten to add that there is no more desire for war at Berlin or Vienna than at St. Petersburg or Paris.

We are no longer living in the times when Count Moltke looked on war as a social necessity, as a benefit, pursuing his master with his obtestations to engage in it. Nor are we in those dangerous days when he thought advantage should be taken of the distress of France to crush her for ever. The young Emperor of Germany sometimes holds language to his troops which is certainly not in harmony with the spirit of the times. He says to them: "You must have but one will, mine; but one law, my law." He showed himself less temperate still when, addressing the 4th Army Corps at Erfurt, he pronounced the following words which would always be regrettable on the lips of a sovereign: "It was here that the *Corsican parvenu* humbled us so profoundly; but it was from here, in 1813, that the flash of revenge started which was to lay him low." This was an imprudent evocation, and were similar remarks heard in France we should be bitterly reproached with them! Such errors may be attributed to juvenile enthusiasm and to a traditional feeling in the House of Hohenzollern. For it is only right to recognise that the Emperor William has given proofs of his firm desire to preserve peace, and we should not be surprised if we were to learn he had taken care to master warlike inclinations around him. We have quoted a few words from his Chancellor which permit one

to think that he has always repudiated all idea of a *preventive* war.

Unfortunately, apart from the fatal and inevitable contingencies we recently pointed out, there remains the mysterious chapter of the unforeseen, that master of the universe, especially since Europe has been divided into two camps as ready to rush on to one another as if we were on the eve of a struggle. I have no liking either for triple or double alliances, wrote Mr. Gladstone; for in reality the definite aim of these alliances is not pacific. The strength of a nation consists, in the last extremity, in the economy of its forces. The future of Europe, I fear is very black, although with the grace of God, the present pacific situation may still last some time.[1] These remarks, emanating from a Statesman of long experience and gifted with a mind developed in the world of politics, deserve to be retained and meditated on.

In truth, in the state Europe was then, bristling with cannon, fortresses, swarming with armed men, what an incalculable fund of prudence and discretion would be required to avoid a conflict! In 1866 while Austria and Prussia were mobilising their armies, some one inquired of Prince Bismarck how it was possible hostilities could break out

[1] Letter addressed to Signor Schilizi, Manager of the *Corriere di Napoli*.

when there was no lawful reason for war. "Ah, bah!" he answered, "the cannon will talk without it." That is the redoubtable unknown, the sword of Damocles suspended over the peace of the world. We trust there will not be found a heart sufficiently steeled, so unchristian-like a soul as to hasten the frightful conflagration which may be the result of this situation; but who can foresee incidents swift and imperious that leave no one any time for reflection? During the fifty years that followed the wars of the First Empire each State possessed its peace budget, which was, in a way, unalterable; each had an army of moderate and invariable strength; no one disturbed his neighbour. Every fresh war required long preparation; there was thus time for explaining matters, and mediators could come forward with offers of assistance.

The Germans of our times have taken us back to the early days of their ancestors, who were always under arms, ever ready to invade territory bordering on their possessions. It pleased King William I. of Prussia to increase his military power, whilst Count Bismarck chose to advise his master, who lent a willing ear, to embark in war; and the peaceful condition in which Europe lived until their time, has been so thoroughly upset that there remains no trace of it. After having rearranged the map of Europe to their fancy and

advantage, they returned victorious and loaded with laurels to Berlin; but did they take repose and prosperity back to Germany? The Swabian and, even more so, the Pomeranian peasants emigrate to escape the benefits of Prince Bismarck's policy. The heavy taxes, the necessity of concluding alliances, of remaining under arms, either on the western or northern frontier, show, on the contrary, that the adviser, of one mind with the sovereign, has inaugurated a period of heavy burdens and protracted anxiety; that together they have cast the country on the road to ruin or gigantic struggles; unless, as we have already said, the menace of another scourge, social warfare, constrains the various Governments to arrive at an understanding guaranteeing a new period of appeasement and concord to the people.

Is there any necessity to mention the disastrous calamities that another war would inflict on Europe? We all foresee them with feelings of horror. Armies of several millions of men are not destroyed in one campaign; a great number of fortresses dotting all the lines of defence, and provided with every technical improvement of modern times, are not reduced so easily. The struggle would, therefore, be long, sanguinary, devastating for all the countries that become the theatre of it, on the Rhine, the Alps, the Vistula. The conviction of this is so painful that Sovereigns and

Statesmen, all speaking with equal fervour, advocate the preservation of peace, and, by professions of faith reiterated without end, repudiate all aggressive intention, and bear witness to their ardent desire to maintain it. But do they conform to this programme by employing their time and efforts in the preparation of war, by persevering in a state of things that must necessarily produce it? One would search history in vain for a precedent authorising one to think so. You do not arm for peace, you arm for war, particularly when you do so to excess; when you display such a passion for arming, there is always a time when you come to blows. Count Bismarck well knew this when he assisted King William in developing the Prussian army by battling with the representatives of the country, by governing without a budget, by devoting, without credits regularly voted, all the available resources to the military forces of the kingdom during the first and hardest period of his long ministry.

The Sovereigns and Governments who sincerely desire to dispel the black spots accumulating at the four corners of the horizon should place their solicitude and care in another sphere. We have said, and it is not possible to contradict us, that by maintaining the present situation, a power more imperious than all human determinations together, the force of circumstances, what the

ancients termed fatality, will lead us direct, inevitably either to war or ruin; it moreover abundantly supplies the most detestable doctrines with powerful material for propagation. Before long, all the causes of some profound trouble, of some perturbation without remedy, will be united: misery, anarchy, a conflagration that is imminent. These dangers must be attended to, and, in presence of that necessity, a Government, formidably armed, draws the sword, convinced of purifying all by the glaive and brand, having, indeed, no other issue from the predicament in which it has placed itself. Is it not the duty of every one to avoid such contingencies whilst it is still possible? We are, perhaps, in error, but we are inclined to think that time, which under such circumstances is of advantage to no one, is less prejudicial to France, as it passes on, than to other Continental powers. The evil it develops is hurtful to the national wealth of each country, and we do not think we shall be expressing a presumptuous opinion in imagining, that our resources permit of our supporting longer than most of our neighbours the international situation that weighs as heavily on them as on ourselves. We believe, nevertheless, that we shall be faithfully interpreting public feeling in France by entreating any who are able to contribute to such a purpose, to seek the solution of this redoubtable problem, which appeals

both to the solicitude and religion of rulers of every order; to spare the world those hecatombs which, come what may, cannot benefit civilisation, which would be a mortal shame for the present generation, and a lawful ground for the malediction of those to come.

We have performed a duty in pointing out the evil, and, in order to fulfil our task in all sincerity, we have hidden nothing. It is not within our sphere to give the remedy. It will be found in the consciences of the powerful of the earth; let them search therein, and they will discover the elements of appeasing solutions. The Triple Alliance is a deed of defiance and hatred; facts prove this superabundantly at present. It will produce what it has had within it in germ since its origin: ruin or war, perhaps both scourges together. If those who formed it or who have become its guardians are not convinced, it is because Jupiter has turned them silly in order to chastise them the better. Morality would be an idle word if this truth, which the wisdom of centuries has bequeathed to us, were not to triumph in our time.

But morality, in history, has overcome all abuse of power, and in this instance it will not fail. Certain publicists, acting under the influence of a feeling that is to be commended, have wished to be before the various Governments in the work of

conciliation for which the populations are offering up all their prayers. They have invented arrangements founded sometimes on exchanges, sometimes on compensations, without ever having been able to conceal from themselves that the great difficulty lies in Alsace-Lorraine. We cannot follow them on this ground, where the most warrantable combinations, those even that seem the most impressive, are put forward without authority or sanction. If the question belongs to the domain of public opinion in some ways, its solution depends exclusively on the initiative and agreement of Governments. It is for them to attend to it; they are entrusted with the most precious of all missions: that of assuring peace and prosperity to the nations whose destinies are in their hands. The task is that of diplomacy. If the matter is left to her she will sail round this tempestuous cape. How many are the conflicts she has prevented, how many the wars she has stayed? Were she in presence of a Gordian knot, she would untie it; our state of civilisation allows of and requires that she should; or, otherwise, it must be severed, recourse must be had to the sabre, and the first cut that is given will be the prelude to disasters that no century has known. Prince Bismarck's work will be completed by the glaive and brand beyond the limits his pride had fixed for it. The responsibility of the originator will

be shared by his continuators. If they do not wish to incur it, let them hurry, for there is but little time; let them consider that war will set several millions of formidably armed men fighting. "Peace," the Emperor William is reported to have said, on hearing of the welcome our fleet received at Cronstadt, "no longer rests with me." That is an error. Of all European sovereigns he better than any other can give peace the basis it requires to be durable. Few Princes before him have had the good fortune to meet with a more noble and glorious task.

*February*, 1894.

# MY MISSION TO EMS

## INTRODUCTION

I HAVE referred in the preface of this volume to the book I published in 1871, in which I printed the most important of the despatches I sent from Berlin during my residence in Prussia, and including the complete correspondence exchanged with the Duc de Gramont on the occasion of my mission to Ems. In 1872 M. de Gramont issued a work entitled *La France et la Prusse avant la guerre*, in which he saw fit to readjust what he termed the inexactness of my comments and to particularly call attention to the results I claimed to have obtained in the course of this last negotiation, and which he contested. Feeling it impossible for me to submit to these rectifications, I had resolved to reply to them, and with that object had prepared a brief statement of the exchange of views I had had with the King of Prussia and of the account I had given of them to the Imperial Government. I was hesitating, however, to

engage in a discussion that might in some respects be unfortunate, when M. de Gramont died. Obedient to a feeling that all will understand, I then made up my mind to keep the work in my drawer intending to publish it if new developments made it an imperative duty for me to do so.

The contradictory versions that have never ceased to be given of my conduct and acts, both in France and abroad, in regard to a matter of eminent interest for the history of our times, have made me decide not to wait until I disappear in my turn without having rectified the reproaches, I might say the accusations, articulated by the Minister of Foreign Affairs who was my last chief. I am sure this resolution will be ratified by public opinion. I give this work here in the form in which it was written at the specified date, adding a few explanatory or complementary notes on incidents that became better known afterwards. The reader, in perusing these pages, should bear in mind that they were penned in 1873, previous to various occurrences that have contributed to throw light on the events to which they refer.

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Great national catastrophes, whilst exasperating the minds of the public, at the same time lead their consciences astray. *Under the imperious*

*influence of this irritating trouble*, public opinion, maddened by a disaster, eagerly seeks the causes of it, and in its precipitation forms impressions, which, however erroneous they be, soon take root and assume the character of belief.

This psychological phenomenon is often met with in our history; it made its appearance in 1870 at the time of our first reverses. Public opinion, astounded at the defeat of our armies, accused the Government of knowing nothing and its agents of having supplied untrustworthy information. Having occupied the Embassy at Berlin for several years, these recriminations touched me personally. I was however conscious of not having been wanting in any of my duties. I endeavoured to throw light on matters, and in a book entitled *Ma Mission en Prusse* I placed the most essential part of my correspondence before the public. I gave the whole of that portion of it which I had exchanged with the Duc de Gramont during the mission I had performed at Ems, confining myself to briefly connecting the facts together, so as to thoroughly establish, without drawing any other inference from them, that I had faithfully, and not without success, accomplished my task both at Ems and Berlin.

M. de Gramont, in his turn, published a work called, *La France et la Prusse avant la guerre*,

in which he considered himself called upon to enter into long explanations to prove that, contrary to my assertions, I had not obtained, whilst carrying out his orders, any *sufficient and timely* concession.

Disavowed by my Chief of the last hour, I found myself obliged, on my own part, to comment on our respective participation in the incidents that preceded the war.

I have no need to refer again to the care I took to justify the confidence the Imperial Government had shown me, in accrediting me as ambassador to the King of Prussia. I proved that I had not neglected sending the Minister any information it was my duty to transmit to him; I established particularly that I had pointed out in an explanatory despatch dated January 5th, 1868, that it had been firmly resolved at Berlin, to restore the German Empire, even by force of arms if necessary; I had foreseen that in such a contingency, the whole of Germany, Governments and populations alike, would gather enthusiastically round Prussia; I neither omitted to mention the armaments that were proceeding before my eyes, nor Count Bismarck's efforts to ensure the kindly neutrality of Russia, especially in view of restraining Austria; finally, I called attention to the candidature of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern to the crown of Spain eighteen

months before it was avowed at Berlin and Madrid, I pointed it out as a stratagem devised by the Prussian Cabinet so as to cause the Imperial Government difficulties of a diplomatic order which might affect both our security and our relations with Germany.

On these points, I have not met with any serious contradictions. It therefore only remains for me to set the assertions of M. de Gramont right in regard to the part I took in the negotiations he instructed me to open at Ems with King William. I know I am undertaking my own defence; I am pleading *pro domo meâ* with the knowledge that whosoever seeks to defend himself is exposed to more criticism than sympathy; but I am compelled to do so; and when I have placed my acts and conduct, as well as the judgment passed on them by M. de Gramont, in the proper light, it will be recognised that I could not abstain from following that course.

## I.

I was at Wildbad when I received orders to repair to Ems, where I was to be joined by a courier bearing the instructions of the Imperial Government. I left without delay and reached my destination on the evening of July 8th. What did the Minister's instructions prescribe

me? After having explained the motives that rendered it necessary to intervene in this affair he wrote as follows:—"Be guided by these reasons, impress them on the King, and exert yourself to obtain a promise from him that he will *advise* Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern to withdraw his acceptance."[1] That was the theme set forth in the official despatch; but to this despatch was joined a private letter stating more precisely the nature of the resolution I was instructed to obtain from the King, whilst at the same time modifying it; in this form it read:—"The King's Government does not approve of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern's acceptance, and gives him *orders* to reconsider this decision which was arrived at without its permission." The Minister added: "It will then be necessary to inform me whether the Prince, obedient to this injunction, renounces his candidature officially and publicly."

It was not thus that I understood and performed M. de Gramont's orders: I obeyed his official instructions without paying any attention to the recommendations in his private letter. I did not ask the King to *give orders* to Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern to reconsider his decision, I requested him to *advise* the Prince to renounce his candidature.

[1] This document, like all those I shall quote later on, will be found in full in my volume *Ma Mission en Prusse*.

Whoever has had anything to do with this kind of diplomatic business knows what gentleness, what precaution is necessary, in opening an irritating discussion, especially when one enters on it direct with a Sovereign. Had I adopted the tone recommended in the Minister's private letter, I should certainly have taken up an attitude that would have been wounding for the King; he would have concluded that there was a firm determination to inflict a personal retractation on him, and I should have brought on an immediate rupture. I should have reversed the parts from the commencement, loaded ourselves with all the wrongs we were justified in reproaching Prussia with; I should have placed all our advantages in jeopardy, especially that resulting from the straightforward manner of our proceedings and the duplicity of the Berlin Cabinet. I was all the more constrained to attenuate the form I gave to my communications, as I perceived the irritation aroused by the utterances of M. de Gramont at the Corps Législatif, during the sitting of July 6th vibrating in Germany. It was evident to me that German pride had been deeply wounded.

In regard to this, here is what our Minister at Stuttgart, a centre, however, where Prussia was regarded with distrust rather than sympathy, wrote to M. de Gramont on July 10th: "I must not conceal from your Excellency the feeling of

bewilderment and dismay that the declaration of July 6th has caused among the public; we are considered generally to have justice on our side, on the basis of the incident itself; but it is regretted that the sense of our own sterling right has not prompted us to greater moderation in the form of expression." If for Southern Germany we had been wanting in forbearance, for the North we had been imperious and aggressive. My first duty compelled me to be mindful of these feelings, which newspapers of all shades on the other side of the Rhine had retailed in passionate language.

But I had a much more powerful reason for advancing with extreme prudence over the ground I was about to approach; I knew it to be strewn with snares. I had detected Prince Leopold's candidature in the month of March of the preceding year; I had conferred on the subject with Count Bismarck, who did not contest the accuracy of my information, but who had refused to give me the assurance that the King would refrain, if the contingency occurred, from authorising his nephew to accept the Spanish crown. I felt convinced that he intended to have recourse to this combination whenever he considered it opportune to cause a bitter disagreement between Germany and France.[1] The trap he set

[1] Recent revelations have amply shown with what anxiety, and

for us in 1870 had been prepared a long time in advance; at Ems my thoughts were particularly busy with the determination not to fall into it myself and drag the Government of my country along with me.[1]

I was, therefore, very careful at the audience the King granted me the day after my arrival, not to suggest he should give Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern *orders* to renounce his candidature. I confined myself to expressing the hope that he would advise him to do so, insisting on the reasons that made it a duty for us to intervene in this matter. In proceeding thus, I did not overlook my official instructions, I conformed to them, without exposing myself to be wanting in the respect due to the Sovereign of a great country; without departing from the sound traditions of diplomacy.

The King, with his customary courtesy, gave me an answer that may be epitomised as follows: "I had no part in the negotiations, which have been carried on between the Spanish Government and the Hohenzollern Princes exclusively. I

what desire to find a cause for rupture, my attitude and speech were watched. To be convinced of this it will suffice to recall under what circumstances and with what rapidity of resolve Count Bismarck took advantage of the opportunity as soon as we gave it him, and with what an easy conscience he altered the Ems despatch.

[1] See *Ma Mission en Prusse*, p. 301 and following.

limited myself to informing Prince Leopold and Prince Anthony, his father, when they solicited my approbation, that I did not consider I could refuse it them. I have just made inquiries as to their present intentions, and I shall wait until I have information on that point, to let you know what resolutions may be adopted." He assured me at the same time, that if Prince Leopold showed himself disposed to withdraw his acceptance, he would hasten to approve that decision. I shall point out, shortly, in what frame of mind, and for what reasons, the King thus assumed an attitude of apparent irresponsibility; but the reader will not forget that if the King refused to take any initiative in the matter, even that of giving advice — and it will be seen that in this respect he showed himself absolutely inflexible — he would have still more resolutely repelled any suggestion to give an order, if perchance I had made one, as M. de Gramont commanded me to do in his private letter. It is clear that I should have placed an insuperable obstacle to any understanding. The King, besides, in announcing to me that he had placed himself in communication with the Princes, gave us a pledge of his participation in the affair, and that was a point gained, and one of extreme importance for the issue of the negotiations.

In conveying an account of this first interview to my Government, I was very careful to fathom what was passing in the King's mind; and the conclusion I arrived at was that if he had no evil designs, he proposed arranging matters so as to be able to pretend that Prince Leopold had spontaneously changed his views in regard to his candidature; the King would thus avoid the necessity of himself personally making a concession calculated to damage his prestige and offend public opinion in Germany. I added that I could not, without incurring the risk of making it thought I had come to Ems solely with the intention of bringing about a rupture, abstain from acquiescing in the King's desire that I should await the answer of the Hohenzollern Princes "to resume our conference."

What reception did this first communication meet with from the Imperial Government? "The King," M. de Gramont wrote to me,[1] "is henceforth a party to the affair; after having made the avowal that he authorised acceptance, he must advise and *obtain* renunciation." The same day he telegraphed to me: "Write me a despatch I can read at the Chambers and publish, in which you will show that the King was aware of and authorised Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern's acceptance, and mention particularly that he told

[1] Letter dated July 10th.

you he desired to concert with the Prince before making known to you what he had resolved."

If the Imperial Government had decided that no arrangement was possible apart from an *order* given by the King to the Prince to renounce his candidature or a *prohibition* to maintain it, M. de Gramont would have informed me; he would have urged me to limit myself to obtaining from the King, without delay, a formal and explicit declaration guaranteeing us Prince Leopold's desistance from that moment. It was certainly not in this sense that I could understand the instructions M. de Gramont sent me, after having received the account of my first interview with the King; I was, on the contrary, justified in concluding that the Imperial Government did not propose placing any obstacle in the way of the understanding the King proposed to arrange with his relatives, and that he thought our efforts should be directed, especially, to securing Prince Leopold's renunciation with the King's assistance. I therefore had every reason to believe I was on the right ground, and ought to remain there.

Nevertheless, although I had been only two days at Ems, M. de Gramont was becoming impatient; he was certainly afraid that there was a desire to keep us inactive whilst the German army was being mobilised. He was, however, too familiar with diplomatic affairs to

be unaware that a negotiation of this importance could not be concluded so rapidly. Notwithstanding, without changing his instructions of the previous day in any way, he telegraphed to me on the evening of the 11th: "At the point we reached, I must not disguise from you that your tone no longer responds to the position taken up by the Emperor's Government. You must now emphasize it more." I was able to answer him, no later than the following morning: "I had understood myself that at the point where matters now are I should adopt a firmer tone and become more pressing. I acted so yesterday, at a fresh interview with the King and previous to receiving your last telegrams, as you will see by the despatch that will reach you to day. You will no doubt be of opinion that I could not emphasize my language more forcibly without ruining the object of my mission."

In my desire to hasten the solution so impatiently awaited at Paris, I had indeed asked for a second audience of the King on the 11th, to obtain from him the authorisation to inform my Government of his intention to advise Prince Leopold to renounce the Spanish crown. I made energetic exertions in that view. After this interview I wrote to M. de Gramont:—

". . . . The King deigned to receive me this morning, and, in accordance with your directions, I

sought to prevail on him to consent without further delay to a resolution that was of a nature to fully satisfy us. I therefore asked him to permit me to let you know that he would invite Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern to renounce his candidature. The Prince, I said, being unable to dispense with conforming to the King's views, we should be at once in a position to calm all apprehensions. To induce his Majesty to favourably entertain the desire I expressed to him, I concealed neither the distrust, nor the irritation of public opinion in France; I told him of the impatience displayed by the Senate and Corps Législatif, and of the necessity in which the Emperor's Government found itself of satisfying them, of the peril this state of things occasioned, and of the additional danger caused by every day's delay. . . . The King frequently interrupted me with objections he had already made at a preceding audience. His Majesty particularly insisted on the capacity in which he had intervened, that of head of the family, which, in his opinion, pledged neither the Sovereign of Prussia nor his Government. I did not confine myself this time to answering that this duality would not be understood, I added that it was inadmissible from every point of view; that the King was chief of the family, because he was the Sovereign, and therefore it was impossible to separate, in the present instance, these two qualities, and that the Hohenzollern

Princes owed him absolute obedience simply because he united one and the other in his person; that the matter could not be viewed in any other light, and that it was, consequently, easy to understand why the accession of Prince Leopold was regarded in France in the light of a Restoration of the Empire of Charles V. . . . .

"'Is it not a fact,' I continued, 'that, in case of a dissent between the Government of your Majesty and that of the Emperor, we should be under the necessity of watching our frontier of the Pyrenees and consequently dividing our forces? No one would deny it. Our conduct is therefore traced out for us by the requirements of our own security, and we cannot, on this occasion, be exposed to the reproach of voluntarily raising a conflict.'

"According to the King I exaggerated the consequences of a combination which he, for his part, had never desired. He maintained it was impossible for him — and the terms in which he expressed himself lead me to think that he considered it incompatible with his sovereign dignity — to modify his attitude and exact that Prince Leopold should renounce the Spanish crown after having told him *he did not forbid him to accept* it. Unless I make a mistake, what the King does not wish is, as I wrote to you, to assume the responsibility of a retreat or of a concession that would offend public feeling in Germany, and it is his firm

intention, if he has no other designs, to cast off all responsibility, and let it rest on Prince Leopold and Prince Anthony, the father, exclusively.

"'Besides,' resumed the King, 'there is no peril in waiting, and the delay of a day or two will not make matters worse. . . .'

"The King, without concealing the impression my remarks had produced on his mind (I had replied to his observations and advanced new arguments), pointed out to me that our perseverance, when he only asked for a very brief delay to ascertain the intentions of the two Princes, might make him think we aimed at bringing on a conflict. I protested against this supposition, and offered the King a sure means of ascertaining our real feelings by begging his Majesty to guarantee us Prince Leopold's renunciation. . . ."

In concluding this despatch, I said:—

"The King asked me again, with real persistency, to telegraph to you *in his name*, without losing a moment, that he expected a communication to-night or to-morrow from Prince Leopold, and that he would at once give me a definite answer."[1]

To this despatch I added a private letter, in which I wrote to M. de Gramont:

"The King, notwithstanding all my efforts, persists in saying he cannot and will not take on

[1] Despatch dated July 11th, 1870.

himself to order Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern to withdraw the word he has sent the Spanish Government. His Majesty leaves me to surmise, and through those about him gives me to understand, as Baron Werther[1] will tell you, that the Prince will *spontaneously* renounce the Spanish crown which has been offered him, and the King will not hesitate to *approve* his decision. . . ."

Why was it we asked the King to give us the assurance he would advise Prince Leopold to renounce the Spanish crown? It was certainly not for the purpose of touching him personally; it was solely with the view of obtaining a guarantee for the Prince's desistance without wandering through long, tedious negotiations. How did the King receive my remarks? Did he decline to enter into them so as to leave us no hope of a satisfactory solution? In none of our interviews did the King express the thought that Prince Leopold had given his word and should abide by it. What he never would concede to me was to give me an undertaking that he would constrain him, even by the channel of advice, to make a renunciation; he declined to proceed in that manner; he did not reject the principal object of our complaint, the renunciation of Prince

[1] Baron Werther, Prussian Ambassador at Paris, had preceded me at Ems. On the 11th, he received orders to return to his post. He left the same afternoon, convinced that the crisis would be settled the following day by the King's declaration.

Leopold. I had had a clear presentiment of this from the commencement of the negotiations, and had very distinctly pointed it out in my communications of July 11th. The King, I said, wishes that the Prince's desistance should appear to be the result of a spontaneous expression of his own will. I had communicated this decision of the King to M. de Gramont early on the morning of the 9th, whilst explaining the reasons by which he had been influenced.

But if I had been unable to persuade the King to consent to the measure that would have most promptly put an end to the affair, I had nevertheless brought him to make us the sacrifice of his nephew's candidature, and of the political views of his own advisers. The King would not give way on the matter of form; but in regard to the broad basis of the question, I had led him to tell me he would put no obstacle in the way of Prince Leopold's renunciation; he allowed me to conjecture and even caused me to be informed that *the Prince must spontaneously renounce the crown that had been offered him, and that his Majesty would not hesitate to approve his resolution.* I had further obtained the King's promise to give me a *definite answer* within a very brief delay, and it has been seen how persistently he had asked me to telegraph, in that sense and in his name, to M. de Gramont.

## II.

My second conference with the King had therefore taken place on the 11th at noon; I gave an account of the substance of it by telegraph, and the same day sent a despatch embodying all the explanations that have just been read; and I, moreover, added a private letter, as I have said. The courier bearing my correspondence reached Paris on the morning of the 12th.

Thus on the morning of the 12th, it is important to note it, before having had any knowledge of the telegram forwarded by Prince Leopold's father to the Spanish Ambassador at Paris, before receiving Baron Werther, before the interpellation of M. Clément Duvernois — incidents to which I shall return later on — M. de Gramont had been correctly informed of the King's intentions. He was aware that he absolutely refused to *enter into an engagement, with us* to give Prince Leopold an order or a counsel, that he desired his nephew's desistance to have all the character of a free and personal resolution, but that he consented to acquiesce in it by a declaration which he authorised me to transmit to the Imperial Government. M. de Gramont knew finally that this declaration would be made to us within a brief delay.

Did this arrangement, the form of which was

approved by the King, whilst it gave us satisfaction in regard to the main point, respond to our lawful requirements? Ought we to be content with the renunciation, reputed voluntary, of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern with the King's simple acquiescence, or did imperative considerations compel us to insist on the King taking the avowed initiative of an order or a counsel addressed to the Prince?

These questions must evidently have been submitted to the judgment of the Emperor and his Ministers. What was decided? What I can affirm, is that the first communications addressed to me on the 12th, *immediately after* the arrival of my courier despatched on the previous evening, fully justified me in thinking that the Imperial Government was of opinion that the solution I anticipated was sufficiently satisfactory.

Here, indeed, is what M. de Gramont telegraphed to me at forty-five minutes past twelve:

"You tell us in your despatch, that the King insists with extreme vivacity, on a very brief delay to ascertain the intentions of the two Hohenzollern Princes, and that, immediately he is acquainted with them, he will give us a definite answer. He adds that he would take our refusal for a wish to provoke a conflict.

"Our object has never been to provoke a conflict, but to protect the legitimate interests of France in a question that we did not raise.

So, whilst contesting the accuracy of the King's reasoning, and whilst energetically maintaining our pretensions, we cannot refuse the King of Prussia the delay he asks us for, but we trust this delay will not exceed a day. *We approve the language you used in the last instance.*"

This first telegram was followed by another despatched at 1.40 and ran as follows :

" Very confidential. Use all your skill, I would even say your subtleness to establish that Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern's renunciation is *announced*, *communicated*, or *transmitted* to you by the King of Prussia or his Government. This is of the utmost importance to us. The King's participation should, at any price, be consented to by him or result from the facts in a tangible manner." [1]

What results from these two telegrams ? That from the 12th at noon, I am no longer urged to insist that the King will *forbid* Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern to insist on his candidature nor even that he will advise him to renounce it. This proves, once more, that such was not the sole object of my mission, as has been pretended by M. de Gramont. It is shown, on the contrary, that they had resolved at Paris to accept the desistance on the conditions that were offered us.

[1] The precise date and hour of these two telegrams have been fixed by M. de Gramont himself. See *La France et la Prusse avant la guerre*, pp. 102 and 103.

The exact sense of these telegrams is given us, besides, by M. de Gramont; this is how he expresses himself on the subject: "Let us admit that Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern, without the King's orders, without the King's advice, alone, of his own free impulse renounced his candidature and informed his Majesty of his having done so; the King could by becoming the direct medium of his cousin's spontaneous resolution, announce the desistance himself, with the accompaniment of a few kind words. The desistance, transmitted by the King, became an official act, a Prussian act, and the Government would have found a shadow of guarantee in it which, in its love for peace, it would have raised to the proportions of a satisfactory assurance. . . . .

"It was under the influence of these impressions that the two following telegrams were sent to Count Benedetti. . . ."[1] — those of the 12th, 12.45 and 1.40, which I have just reproduced.

The Emperor's Government, even according to M. de Gramont, had therefore found the basis of an acceptable arrangement in the information I forwarded on the 11th. Did it contain merely the shadow of a guarantee, and is M. de Gramont authorised to pretend that all I had asked had been refused, that on the 12th, I had obtained

[1] *La France et la Prusse avant la guerre*, pp. 101 and 102.

absolutely nothing ?[1] I shall correct this assertion further on. At present I will resume this first part of the negotiation, and I establish that the King, pressed by my demands, had asked for a short respite to communicate to me the solution he had decided on ; that he allowed me to surmise that Prince Leopold would desist, and that he would join his sovereign approbation to that Prince's renunciation ; that this two-fold declaration was announced to me for the following day ; that the Imperial Government was informed of this on the morning of the 12th ; that M. de Gramont telegraphed to me that the delay solicited by the King was granted him ; that he urgently told me to establish that the renunciation had been announced, communicated, or simply transmitted to me by the King. I moreover show that if nothing had yet been definitely concluded on the 12th, the solution was a fact that was morally certain, that at that time it had been consented to by both parties, and that all that was wanting was the King's declaration. As to Prince Leopold's initiative, as to the spontaneity of his determination, we all knew, on either side, that it was a fiction which, in reality, could deceive no one : nobody could have the least doubt in France or Germany, or anywhere else, that the Prussian candidate's conduct would be in accordance with

[1] *La France et la Prusse avant la guerre*, p. 160.

the views of his Sovereign. It would therefore become evident for Europe that the King, without consenting to enter into an engagement with us, had decided, as we had asked, to advise Prince Leopold to renounce a crown, which at another moment, and without our knowledge, he had advised him to accept.

Moreover, did the King's declaration come in time, within the delay proposed on the one side and accepted on the other, between Ems and Paris? Was it in accordance with our expectations? Certainly, and on all points.

On the 13th, indeed, I was able to telegraph to M. de Gramont: "The King has received Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern's reply; it is from Prince Anthony, and informs his Majesty that Prince Leopold, his son, has desisted from his candidature to the Spanish crown. The King authorises me to make known to the Emperor's Government that he approves this resolution. The King entrusted one of his aides-de-camp with the duty of making this communication to me, and I reproduce the exact terms of it."

I will relate further on why the King did not make this declaration to me himself; but in the form in which it reached me, did it not fulfil the programme of the previous day? What, indeed, were the conditions of this programme? M. de Gramont had fixed them himself in the two first

telegrams of the 12th. The delay granted to the King was not to exceed a day; Prince de Hohenzollern was to desist; the King was to communicate this renunciation to me; the King's participation was, at any price, to be consented to by him or to result from the facts in a tangible manner. Now, it was certainly the day following the 12th, and within the stipulated delay, that I received the King's declaration; it was to the effect that Prince Leopold had renounced the Spanish crown; I was able to inform my Government that the King approved of his action. Thus the desistance had been announced, communicated, and transmitted to me by the King, whose participation was also as manifest, as *tangible* as M. de Gramont could desire.

I should like to terminate these remarks here; but M. de Gramont has wished, he says, to act the part of a *redresser, with the sole object* of placing truth in face of *voluntary* or *involuntary* error,[1] and he too often puts me on my trial, my assertions are too frequently the object of his rectifications, for me to abstain from following him. It is not without painful feeling, without lively repugnance, that I make up my mind to do so; the reserve I observed, in publishing my *justificative book*, according to M. de Gramont's expression, superabundantly proved my sincere desire to avoid a

[1] *La France et la Prusse avant la guerre*, p. 6.

regretful controversy, and if I now cast off this reserve it is because I am imperatively bound to do so.

## III.

I have shown, if I am not mistaken, that on the 12th, at the moment when M. de Gramont sent the telegraphic despatches of 12.45 and 1.40, the Imperial Government had resolved to consent to Prince Leopold's renunciation on the conditions, or rather in the form, conceded by the King. It is important to bear this fact in mind, because it is from that day that one observes the appearance of fresh complications which led to war.

It was indeed on that afternoon that the Spanish Ambassador at Paris received a telegraphic despatch sent from Sigmaringen by Prince Anthony of Hohenzollern, and announcing that Prince Leopold, his son, had withdrawn his candidature. How did M. de Gramont regard this communication, and what determinations were suggested by it? On the 12th, at three o'clock, he receives the Prussian representative at Paris, Baron von Werther, who had arrived that same morning from Ems.

"We had," he says, "hardly exchanged a few words when I was interrupted by a message sent me by the Spanish Ambassador. . . . . He brought

me the news of the desistance of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern and placed before me the telegram he had just received from Prince Anthony. M. Olozaga congratulated himself on this solution, for, from the point of view of the Madrid Cabinet, it was all the more complete as it was, in reality, its own work. For my part, I could not conceal from myself that the desistance, coming in this form, far from advancing our business, complicated it, on the contrary, in a most serious way. . . . .

"Not a word anent France," continues M. de Gramont, "not a word anent Prussia. All was passing between Prince Anthony of Hohenzollern and Spain. Thus the hope we had founded on a participation even indirect of the King in the Prince's desistance faded away. We had thought that if the King had informed us of his cousin's resolution, it would have been possible to find, in this Royal communication, a guarantee, a satisfaction that would have sufficed. Here the King of Prussia not only communicated us nothing, but we heard of the desistance by a public telegram of the Havas Company, forwarded without being in cipher, and the contents of which had consequently become known as it passed along the line to many other persons before reaching us. . . . . It was impossible to make any mistake as to the reception the Chambers, the whole country would give to this document, the publication of which was

already an accomplished fact. . . . . The Government was in presence of a new situation. It was evidently necessary to think about new expedients. . . . .

"It would be superfluous to describe here the state of people's minds at the time when Prince Anthony's despatch reached the hands of the public. . . . The outburst of indignation that came from every organ of the press, one after the other, and which among the masses took the form of excitement that was almost disquieting. . . . There were only two courses to follow: either to associate one's self in a measure with popular feeling whilst seeking to restrain it, or to brave it openly by declaring that in presence of the refusal of the King of Prussia, it was necessary to renounce all hope of satisfaction, all guarantee against the return of such events, and be contented with the simple desistance of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern." [1]

Thus spoke M. de Gramont. But it was not necessary to choose either of these courses. There was a third, which was already traced out by the state of our negotiations with the King on the 12th, and which it was important to firmly keep to. I explain it.

First of all, it will be well at this point to recall the circumstances that one requires to have

[1] *La France et la Prusse avant la guerre*, pp. 109 and following.

uppermost in one's mind, if one desires to form a correct idea of what occurred on this fatal day. Had the Spanish Ambassador shown Prince Anthony's telegram to other members of the Cabinet before going to M. de Gramont? It has been affirmed that it was divulged shortly before the opening of the sitting of the Corps Législatif. The President of the Council on reaching the Chamber was able to communicate its contents to several deputies, notably to M. Thiers, who was of opinion that this desistance guaranteed peace and was sufficient.[1] It must, however, be acknow-

[1] "He (M. Émile Ollivier) hastened up to M. Thiers on reaching the chamber: 'You were right! We have succeeded! It is peace!'—'Now,' M. Thiers said to him, 'you must keep quiet.'—'Be at ease,' he replied, 'we have peace, and we will see it is not disturbed.'" (Jules Simon, *Souvenirs du 4 Septembre*, p. 161.) Such was so thoroughly the President of the Council's feeling that a newspaper, the *Constitutionnel*, which notoriously received hints from the Ministry, regarded Prince Leopold's desistance as an important success, although it had as yet only been announced by his father and without any participation of the King of Prussia.

"We are satisfied," it said in its number published on the morning of the 13th. "Prince Leopold had accepted the Spanish Crown. France declared that she could not consent to a political combination or family arrangement that she considered threatened her interests, and the candidature has been withdrawn. Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern will not reign in Spain. We do not ask for anything further, and we welcome this pacific solution with pride.

"It is a great victory that costs neither a tear nor a drop of blood."

I had pursued no other aim, myself, during my stay at Ems, but I had always wished to attain it with the accompaniment of the King's sanction, which would have conveyed to this result all the aspect of a sound and lasting arrangement. In any case, it is well

ledged that this was neither the feeling of most of the members of the Assembly, nor particularly that of the journalists who had invaded the rooms at the Palais Bourbon. Their indignation was, on the contrary, sharp and noisy. M. Clément Duvernois ascended the tribune amidst the excitement and asked to interpellate the Government "on the guarantees it intended stipulating for to avoid the successive recurrence of complications with Prussia." This was the first suggestion of the baleful thought to provide against a contingency that was from every point of view unlikely to occur; until then, the Government, at all events, had mentioned neither the necessity nor the suitability of it.

Let us now see what was the character, the value, or the import of the telegram communicated by M. Olozaga. This despatch came from a Prince whom we had ourselves kept apart from our discussions. It came neither from the Berlin nor the Madrid Cabinet. M. Olozaga had not been requested to show it to the French Government. He had done so, but in a private capacity and on his own responsibility. There was and there could be no mention either of France or Prussia in it. It was entirely unconnected with

to note that at this solemn moment the President of the Council was far from sharing the feeling of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and of regarding Prince Anthony's telegram and the publicity given to it in the light he did.

the negotiations we had opened at Ems. In a word, so far as we were concerned, it did not exist, and we ought to have ignored it or have treated it as a dead letter. That was the Emperor's view. "Prince Anthony's despatch addressed to Prim,"[1] he wrote to M. de Gramont on the evening of the 12th, "is an unofficial document, so far as we are concerned, which no one was legally entrusted with the duty of showing to us. . . . So long as we are without an official communication from Ems, we are not supposed to have received any reply to our lawful demands. . . ."[2]

One can understand that the deputies and public, knowing nothing of our negotiations, easily formed the opinion at the news of Prince Leopold's renunciation, announced by the Spanish Ambassador, that Prussia, that the King himself meant

[1] By the intermediary of M. Olozaga.

[2] This letter will be found at p. 136 of *La France et la Prusse avant la guerre.*

I have also had in my hands the minute of a despatch sent to King Victor Emmanuel by one of his agents on the afternoon of the 12th, after an interview with the Emperor, and announcing that his Majesty felt lively satisfaction at the desistance of Prince Leopold, although he as yet only knew of it by his father's message, as the pacific issue of the crisis. The King, it was added, could, the Emperor said, return to the Alps and peacefully resume chamois shooting. The King, indeed, had discontinued this pastime, and had returned in all haste to Turin when he heard of the complications that had so suddenly arisen. I am not indebted to M. Nigra for information in regard to this incident, but I think I can invoke his testimony, as he was present at the interview which I think I have been right in referring to here.

to steal away and give the information that reached us, in an indirect manner, and under cover of a foreign diplomatic agent, for all satisfaction. Deputies and public were justified in considering this proceeding a fresh insult, added to that which the Berlin Cabinet had been guilty of towards France by arranging the threads of an intrigue at Madrid conceived in a hostile and perfidious spirit. This conviction was calculated to cause irritation, and it is not unnatural that a voice was raised in the Corps Législatif to interpellate the Government.

What is not understood is that M. de Gramont, who was thoroughly informed on every point, should have shared this impulse, and have adapted his language and resolutions to it. He knew the value of Prince Anthony's telegram; he knew the moment was close at hand when the King would answer our demands; he knew in what terms and under what form the Prussian monarch would come to an explanation with us, and he was all the more bound to await this declaration, as we had granted the King the delay he had asked us for. Assuredly the transmission of Prince Anthony's telegram had been arranged between Ems and Sigmaringen; it had preceded the King's declaration; it had no doubt been so arranged to thoroughly establish Prince Leopold's spontaneity. He alone had accepted the Spanish offers, it was pretended, he alone

declined them: it was hoped thus to disengage both the Emperor's responsibility and that of his Government; but no one could have been deceived by the manœuvre; and, besides, would it not have been wise policy to have refrained from noticing these efforts which were directed especially towards diminishing the irritating impression that this incident had produced in Germany?

If M. de Gramont had thought, like the Emperor, that Prince Anthony's despatch had no value for us, and that we were therefore understood to have received no answer, what would have happened? The King notified to us on the following day, in the official form, through the intermediary of the French Ambassador, not only that Prince Leopold had desisted, but that he, the King, gave his entire approval to that renunciation without any reservation. We thus obtained, with every possible guarantee, the satisfaction due to us.

As to the *excitement that was almost disquieting*, which had animated public feeling, as soon as Prince Anthony's message became known, that could easily have been appeased. This excitement found its origin in the thought that the communication made to the Spanish Ambassador was the only reparation that would be accorded us; this was an error; it should have been set right, a summary statement should have been made to the Chamber from the tribune as to the state of

our negotiations at that moment. M. de Gramont by giving an explanation would have tranquillised the Assembly and the public mind, and the next day, on learning the step taken by the King, the satisfaction would have been all the more pronounced, as on the previous evening every one had experienced humiliating disappointment. It is, therefore, not correct to say that we had either to *associate* in the national feeling or *brave* it.

## IV.

Yet it was under the influence of this mistaken conviction that the Duc de Gramont, who had heard at that time of the interpellation of M. Duvernois, resumed the discussion that had been interrupted by M. Olozaga with the Prussian Ambassador. What was its subject? M. de Gramont has been careful to inform us, and it is well to quote what he says about it. When explaining his Sovereign's real intentions, Baron Werther persistently maintained, writes M. de Gramont: "that, by authorising Prince de Hohenzollern's candidature, the King had never had any intention of being offensive to the Emperor and had never supposed that the matter could have given umbrage to France. . . . .

"I therefore pointed out to Baron de Werther," continues M. de Gramont, "that from the moment

he assured me that nothing had been farther from his Sovereign's mind than to offend the Emperor or disturb France, such a given assurance would certainly be of a nature to facilitate the understanding we were seeking . . . . and that being so, I submitted to his appreciation whether the proper mode to employ would not be a letter from the King to the Emperor. . . . .

"Baron von Werther on his part, without formally agreeing to this suggestion, did not oppose its discussion, as his despatch shows. I have found among my papers the minute of a note I wrote there and then, and a copy of which I gave him. Its object was to sum up the assurances that seemed to me likely to facilitate the understanding we were both in search of. This is how it was worded:

"'By authorising Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern to accept the Spanish crown, the King did not think he was injuring the interests or dignity of the French nation. His Majesty approves of the Prince of Hohenzollern's withdrawal and expresses his desire that all cause of misunderstanding between his Government and that of the Emperor may henceforth disappear.'

"Such was," M. de Gramont states further on, "the course we had suggested to the Prussian Ambassador, not with the idea of publishing the text of the note, as he has erroneously written,

but simply with the thought of making known its substance in order to obtain a basis for our conciliatory and pacific efforts." [1]

How did the Prussian Ambassador receive this proposal? The two diplomatists are not absolutely agreed on this point. "I pointed out to the Duc de Gramont," M. de Werther has stated in his despatch, "that such a course would be rendered extremely difficult by the explanations he had given on the 6th of this month to the Chamber of Deputies; they contained statements that must have deeply offended his Majesty the King."

However this may be, the Prussian Ambassador undertook to transmit the suggestion which had been made to him to his Sovereign, but only when he had been given to understand that I should be entrusted with this duty if he refused to perform it himself.

M. de Gramont went to Saint Cloud, at the conclusion of his interview with the Prussian Ambassador, no doubt to confer with the Emperor. What passed between them? M. de Gramont does not tell us, neither does he inform us of the Sovereign's opinion of this grave incident; but we can gather this opinion from the facts, and it is easy to bring it to light thanks to some documents

[1] See *La France et la Prusse avant la guerre*, p. 115 and following.

M. de Gramont includes in his work. If the Emperor had given his approval to the overture made to Baron Werther, if he had considered it becoming and opportune, the first duty of his Minister for Foreign Affairs, supported by his acquiescence, would have been to have informed his Plenipotentiary at Ems without delay, and instructed him to spare no effort to obtain the King's assent to the matter. Yet, what did M. de Gramont do? On returning to his Ministry he telegraphed to me: "Seven p.m. We have received the renunciation of Prince Anthony, in the name of his son Leopold, of his candidature to the throne of Spain through the intermediary of the Spanish Ambassador; in order that this withdrawal may have its full effect, it seems necessary that the King of Prussia should associate himself with it and give us an assurance that he will not again authorise this candidature. Be good enough to seek an audience of the King to obtain this declaration. . . . ."

This telegram left me in ignorance of the proposal made to Baron Werther and of that Ambassador's undertaking to transmit it to his Sovereign. M. de Gramont could not, however, have overlooked that on the following day, on the arrival of the despatch of the Prussian representative at Paris, I should find myself in the strange position of having to present to the King a very

different basis of agreement to the one which, unknown to me, Baron Werther would have sent him. Is it not already permissible to presume that the Emperor had rejected the compromise suggested by M. de Gramont, considering, as a Sovereign, that the King of Prussia would look upon it as incompatible with his dignity? It is evidently on this account that, during the interview at Saint Cloud, the proposal I was instructed to make was substituted for the one which had been suggested to the Prussian Ambassador. The difference was considerable: I had to ask the King neither for a letter nor the justification of his previous conduct; I had merely to solicit a verbal declaration guaranteeing us against the repetition of a candidature we could not submit to.[1]

[1] There is one point which to me remains absolutely obscure, and which I should not know how to attempt to elucidate. It seems to me that it cannot be doubtful that the instructions given me on the evening of the 12th implied, in the Emperor's mind, the abandonment of the proposal made during the day to the Prussian Ambassador. But, in this case, what was the duty of the Minister for Foreign Affairs? To instruct me as to his interview with Baron Werther and to authorise me to declare that it was to be considered null and void. This is what the Emperor certainly presumed. Was it simply an omission on M. de Gramont's part, or did he persuade himself that my silence would suffice to show the King of Prussia that the French Government did not persist in the desire it had expressed to his representative? This is what I am unable to answer. What is certain is that the two proposals reaching the King on the same day were bound to mutually damage each other and seriously complicate matters, because on presenting the one I was not expressly authorised to withdraw the other.

But what more than abundantly proves that the Emperor never for a moment agreed to M. de Gramont's suggestion is that, during the evening, shortly after their interview, he thought it necessary, in order to distinctly express his way of thinking, to send him the letter from which I have already quoted, and which I think it well to give in its entirety :—

"Thinking over our conversations of to-day and reading Prince Anthony's telegram again, I see we must confine ourselves to giving additional emphasis to the despatch you have of course sent to Benedetti, by laying stress on the following points :—

"1. We are dealing with Prussia and not with Spain.

"2. The telegram sent by Prince Anthony to Prim is a non-official document for us which nobody has been instructed, lawfully, to communicate to us.

"3. Prince Leopold consented to be a candidate for the throne of Spain, and it is his father who withdraws the candidature.

"4. It is therefore necessary that Benedetti should insist, as he has been instructed to do, upon having a reply by which the King would undertake, for the future, not to permit Prince Leopold, who has made no promise, to follow his brother's example and start, one fine day, for Spain.

"5. So long as we have not received an official communication from Ems, we are not presumed to have received an answer to our lawful demands.

"6. It is therefore impossible to make a communication to the Chambers before being better informed."

The Emperor had certainly thought with his Minister, and it is to be regretted he did so, that an immediate explanation in the Corps Législatif would be premature. He was no doubt persuaded that the excitement occasioned by Prince Anthony's telegram would be dispelled by that which I had announced for the following day, embodying the King of Prussia's declaration. What is more certain is that the Emperor did not vary as to the value to be attached to the telegram received by M. Olozaga, and that he never saw anything in it beyond a document that should be ignored.

M. de Gramont, conforming to the Emperor's intentions, sent me another telegram at 11.45 at night couched in the following terms: "The Emperor instructs me to point out to you that we cannot consider the renunciation communicated to us by the Spanish Ambassador, and which is not addressed to us direct, as a sufficient answer to the lawful demands we have made to the King of Prussia. . . . ." And he again urged me to insist with a view to obtaining a declaration that would be a guarantee for the future. He thus ratified

his telegram of seven o'clock in so far as the nature of M. Olozaga's visit was concerned.[1]

The reader will therefore bear in mind that on the 12th, before noon, we considered the desistance of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern an acceptable solution if the King notified it to us himself with the accompaniment of his approbation. On the afternoon of the same day, after the arrival of Prince Anthony's telegram, after the interpellation of M. Clément Duvernois, there is a complete change. In the existing state of public opinion, and the attitude of the parliamentary majority, "it was impossible," wrote M. de Gramont, "to accept the desistance without stipulating guarantees ! . . ." Were these guarantees indispensable, and what reasons were there for presuming that the King of

[1] The following day, the 13th, M. de Gramont nevertheless made the following declaration to the Corps Législatif: "Yesterday the Spanish Ambassador *officially* announced to us Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern's renunciation of his candidature to the Spanish throne. The negotiations we are engaged in with Prussia, and *which have never had any other aim*, are not yet concluded. It is therefore impossible for us to speak of them and to give the Chamber and country a general account of the affair." This was not the view of the Emperor, who attributed no *official* character to Prince Anthony's telegram, and he had explicitly pointed out this in his letter to M. de Gramont.

I could argue from this declaration that if our negotiations *never had any other object* than the renunciation of Prince Leopold, I had on my side thoroughly understood the character and aim of my mission, and that the way in which I acquitted myself of it deserves none of the reproaches, none of the rectifications M. de Gramont has bestowed.

[2] See *La France et la Prusse avant la guerre*, p. 130.

Prussia, who had issued from this conflict with some damage to his prestige, would consent to renew it? Every Cabinet, the press and public opinion in every country had blamed the clandestine way in which this affair had been introduced. How, then, could one admit that the King, after having approved his nephew's resolution in a communication made to the French Ambassador, could have, would have authorised him to resume his candidature? There was no need to provide for this contingency: there was no necessity to stipulate for guarantees in the view of preventing it.

I have finished with the 12th, I come to the 13th, which completed what the previous day commenced, and left the friends of peace no hope of preserving it.

## V.

I had received the two telegrams M. de Gramont had sent me on the evening of the previous day, during the night; obedient to my instructions I solicited another audience of the King in the early morning.

His Majesty, perceiving me in one of the walks, advanced towards me, and I was able, without further delay, to inform him that Prince Leopold's renunciation was already known at Paris. He expressed great surprise. Assuredly

the King could not have had the hope of making me believe that he was still ignorant, at that moment, as to what the son had resolved and the father had done, and that Prince Anthony in telegraphing to Paris, had refrained from telegraphing to Ems,[1] which would have constituted a breach of courtesy towards the head of his house; but the King, who had given out the parts, remained faithful to the one he had reserved to himself. He wished to continue to the end the fiction he had invented to shield himself, personally, from any possible reproach of having made a concession to France derogatory to his dignity. He particularly desired to be able to affirm that he had limited himself to respecting the entire liberty of his relatives, as he pretended he had done at the commencement.

[1] The King had himself told me on the previous day, that he was in telegraphic correspondence with the Princes of Hohenzollern. I had, indeed, been able to telegraph to M. de Gramont on the 12th, at six o'clock in the evening: "The King has just told me he has received a telegram informing him that Prince Leopold's answer will certainly reach him to-morrow. He added that he would send for me as soon as he was in possession of it." This telegram no doubt announced to him the departure of the one Prince Anthony addressed the same day to M. Olozaga, but the King did not tell me so, not desiring to intervene himself until the morrow, as had always been his intention, when the renunciation would be a fact accomplished and made public without his having had anything whatever to do with it, thus adapting each of his acts to the stage effect he had decided on from the commencement. I was not therefore mistaken, and I had not deceived the Imperial Government, in announcing, immediately after my first audience, how matters were proceeding.

Nevertheless, I pointed out to the King that as a result of this incident, Prince Leopold's desistance would not appease the excitement that had been aroused by his candidature. I added, that to calm all anxiety, to strengthen the good understanding between the two countries, it seemed desirable to guarantee the future as soundly as the past, and in that view I begged him to authorise me to transmit to my Government the assurance that his Majesty would, if necessary, exert his authority to prevent any attempt to resume the candidature that had been abandoned.

"You are asking me," answered the King, "for an undertaking without limit and embracing all contingencies; I could not bind myself to that." He added that he could not alienate his liberty of resolution in that manner, "that he had no hidden design, and that *this affair had caused him too much serious thought for him not to desire it to be irrevocably set aside.*" I pointed out to him in regard to this, that we could meet on the ground where the King had himself taken up his position, that I was addressing the head of the family, and that in that capacity he could assuredly accede to the request I was instructed to make him. Vain efforts; the King absolutely refused to consent, whilst expressing to me his regret at being unable to make "a

new and unexpected concession."[1] The King, moreover, renewed to me the assurance that the courier despatched from Sigmaringen would arrive in the course of the day, and that he would at once send for me to make me the communication he had spoken of at our previous interview. I was therefore justified in thinking that I should have an opportunity, before the day was over, of making another attempt to prevail over the resolution I had been unable to shake in the morning.

The opportunity did not occur, and matters passed quite differently. The King, instead of inviting me to go to him, entrusted his aide-de-camp, Prince Radziwill with the duty of bringing me his declaration, which was conformable to the assurances I had received, and, at 3.45, I was able to send M. de Gramont the telegraphic despatch I have already quoted.[2]

To what circumstances must this new attitude of the King be attributed? He had up to that moment displayed a conciliatory disposition and the desire to extricate himself from this difficulty, provided that whilst giving France satisfaction, he was himself free from all responsibility towards Germany. He had accepted the dis-

[1] All the developments of this interview will be found in my despatch of July 13th.

[2] See p. 290.

cussion, and this is all the more deserving of remark as, during his whole reign, he had constantly avoided entering into any diplomatic question with the foreign representatives accredited to him, invariably leaving such matters to his Minister. At ten o'clock in the morning, he opens, himself, our last interview on meeting me; at three o'clock in the afternoon, notwithstanding his promises to receive me, he will only communicate through the intermediary of one of his officers. He was evidently displeased at the overture I had made to him, and had given me to understand that such was the case when he told me we were requiring a *new* and *unexpected* concession which, made public, would expose and humiliate him. It was in this frame of mind and a few minutes after our early morning meeting, that he had received Baron Werther's despatch which had come by the Paris mail.[1] As a matter of fact M. de Gramont had asked him for a still more novel and unexpected concession which for my part I was absolutely ignorant of and could not withdraw. He had evidently made up his mind from that

[1] Baron Werther had declined to accede to the desire that had been expressed to him to make use of the telegraph in transmitting to the King the communication he had consented to submit to him. (See his despatch.) This despatch forwarded from Paris on the 12th, reached Ems on the 13th by the same channel and at the same time as the ordinary letters.

moment; he did not avoid the undertaking he had contracted: he had informed me that Prince Leopold had desisted, and that he acquiesced in the renunciation, but he was thoroughly determined not to proceed with the negotiations any further, considering they came to an end with the communication I had been authorised to transit to my Government. I had to telegraph to Paris: "The King, in answer to a request for another audience, sends me word that he cannot consent to resume the discussion respecting assurances for the future. His Majesty has informed me that he abides by what he said to me this morning. . . . . 'The King,' his messenger further said, 'has consented to give his *entire and unreserved* approbation to the desistance of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern, and he cannot do more.'"

It will be remarked that the King did not close his door to me, that he simply declined to discuss our last proposal again. He received me, moreover, before his departure on the following day. Therefore at Ems there was neither an insulter nor a person insulted, and I cannot too strongly insist on the point, in contradiction to the allegations introduced by Prince Bismarck whilst disguising the real facts. That, indeed, is what he did not hesitate to do, by intervening, at this moment, in a discussion to which he had

hitherto remained a stranger. How became he a party to it, and by the aid of what expedients did he bring about the complications of the final hour? I still have this to explain.

## VI.

On the afternoon of the 13th the King sent Count Bismarck[1] a telegram, the very same that the latter was to alter. In possession of this document, and considering it gave him authority to take the affair in hand himself,[2] and

[1] See General Caprivi's speech in the Reichstag at the sitting of November 24th, 1892, which contains the text of the King's telegram. In this same speech, the new Chancellor undertakes to set the assertions of his predecessor right. Briefly recalling the incidents that marked the day of the 13th, at Ems, he expresses himself thus: "Count Benedetti made another attempt to approach the King, who caused him to be informed that if he asked for an audience *to return again to the question of guarantees*, it could not be granted." What the King declined to do, therefore, was to resume the interview of the morning. This is shown or rather is expressly stated in the report of the aide-de-camp on duty, who served as intermediary between the King and Ambassador, and in no way differs from the communications I made to M. de Gramont in the course of the 13th. This is therefore an historical point clearly established by the agreement of all the intervening parties. See *Ma Mission en Prusse*, pp. 278 and following.

[2] This despatch concluded thus: "His Majesty leaves it to your Excellency to decide whether M. Benedetti's new demand and the refusal it met with should be communicated to our representatives abroad and to the press." Until the evening of the 13th, Count Bismarck had not been called upon to intervene in the negotiation. In any case his participation, whatever it may have been, exercised no perceptible influence on the King's attitude. This is shown by

that in future he had freedom of action, Count Bismarck undertook, without losing a moment, to render all conciliation impossible and war inevitable. After having altered the sense of the King's telegram and given it a meaning it did not possess, he communicated it to all his diplomatic agents abroad. He informed all Europe, by this insidious manœuvre, that the King had shown the French Ambassador the door, inflicting thereby a humiliation on the Imperial Government which the Chancellor foresaw would compel it to take the initiative of a rupture. After speaking to Europe he addressed public feeling in Germany. The newspapers to which he gave a tone, published in the evening, all gave the same warlike cry in inflammatory and arrogant language: they said the King and nation had been outraged, and that it was the country's duty to rise in a body and wreak vengeance for such a deadly offence. Instead of exercising his authority over the press to appease this popular irritation in regard to which he feigned to be concerned on that selfsame

his interview with the Generals von Moltke and von Roon during which he mutilated his Sovereign's telegram. The three companions were saddened to see the matter fading into smoke instead of ending in a noisy rupture. The King's telegram makes its appearance at six o'clock, and they all set their wits to work to use it as an instrument to bring on war. Count Bismarck's intervention dates therefore from that time. It will be seen, later on, that I was absolutely convinced of this in 1873.

evening whilst conversing with the British Ambassador,[1] he directed all his efforts towards exasperating national susceptibilities.

## VII.

What must we infer from these facts which I have just briefly recalled? Either I am very much mistaken, or it is permissible to conclude from them that during the few days I was engaged in following my negotiations with the King whilst conforming to my official instructions, no incident arose of a nature to endanger their success. I graduated the firmness of my language in my audiences of the 9th and 11th, as has been seen, so as to bring the King to explain himself more clearly in regard to his real intentions, to give me more satisfactory assurances concerning the final resolution Prince Leopold would take and his own assent; but on both occasions I remained within the limits of prudent moderation. No one will blame me for having observed this attitude in such a delicate discussion; a rash or even an ill-considered utterance might make it deviate and occasion a sanguinary conflict.

I ventured to remark in a letter written in the month of November, 1870: "Did I succeed in

[1] See the despatch from Lord Augustus Loftus in the Blue Book of July 13th, 1870.

my efforts at Ems? Yes, assuredly; I had indeed, in four days' negotiations, during which I had been careful of all susceptibilities, performed the mandate with which I had been entrusted." M. de Gramont has vigorously reproached me with this declaration. "On the 12th," he says, "the Ambassador had obtained nothing, nothing. His instructions not only ordered him to secure the Prince's desistance, but to obtain from the King that he would advise him to take that course, which is quite different. But the King had invariably refused to give this assurance." Was this declaration indispensable, and was it wise or advantageous, in any degree, to make the satisfaction which we claimed, and was imminent, subservient to it? I have never thought so.

". . . . On the morning of the 13th," writes M. de Gramont,[1] "when M. Benedetti, furnished with the instructions he had received during the night, waited on the King and asked him to refuse his sanction to a resumption of the Hohenzollern candidature, *no concession had* at that moment, *been accorded by the King to France.*

"All our Ambassador had asked, all, had been refused. He had obtained absolutely nothing."

The facts answer for me.

Did Prince Leopold desist? Yes. Did the

[1] *La France et la Prusse avant la guerre*, p. 159.

King notify this renunciation to us and did he approve it? Yes. Was this declaration made to us at an opportune moment, at the right time? Yes, once more. I, therefore, obtained the concessions that were the objects of my mission.

But how and by what series of new and unforeseen circumstances, did this entire satisfaction so laboriously won, become the prelude of war? That has been seen, and I have no need to return to the matter, but there is one point on which I wish to place additional emphasis. Let it be observed that it was on the 13th at forty-five minutes past three that I telegraphed the King's declaration. Now, at that moment Count Bismarck was still a stranger to our negotiations; he had not intervened in them; he had been in the impossibility of placing obstacles in the way of their progress or of raising difficulties of any sort. He was at Berlin, blaming his master, but reduced to inaction and powerless; he saw, with intense bitterness, the affair turning to our advantage. To understand how it happened that he was called on to interfere, it is necessary to form a very precise idea of the impression produced by the two demands submitted to the King on the 13th, one by me and the other by Baron Werther. That which I was entrusted with the duty of presenting to him — an assurance guaranteeing us

against a resumption of the Prussian Prince's candidature — certainly upset him ; it was not however of a nature to raise redoubtable complications. We confined ourselves in fact to soliciting a verbal declaration without making it a condition of the understanding we were endeavouring to arrange. I had even carefully sought not to give it any other significance in my explanation with the King. And so, on bringing our interview to an end, he assured me he would send for me, in the course of the day, as soon as he had heard from the Princes of Hohenzollern.[1] But Baron Werther's despatch arrived bringing the demand or *suggestion*, if you will, made to that Ambassador at Paris ; then, the King's frame of mind undergoes a complete change. He will only communicate with me through the intermediary of one of his aides-de-camp, and he authorises Count Bismarck to take the continuation of the negotiation in hand. The visit I receive from the King's messenger terminates at forty-five minutes past three, and at that same hour he has the telegram sent to the Chancellor authorising him to intervene in the discussion.[2]

[1] See *Ma Mission en Prusse*, p. 374.

[2] We know now that this telegram was handed in at the telegraph office at Ems, at forty minutes past three and that it reached Berlin at eight minutes past six. (General Caprivi's speech in the Reichstag on November 24th 1892.) It was therefore at the same hour and simultaneously that the King took the two-fold resolution

Everything was at once precipitated. On the night of the 13th, the Prussian Ambassador at Paris was recalled; on the 14th he visited M. de Gramont: "Our interview was brief, relates the latter; he informed me, without making any comments, that his Government had blamed him for the way in which he had received our suggestions at our last interview on the 12th, and that he had orders to go on leave."[1]

At the sitting of the Reichstag on July 20th, Count Bismarck laid several papers on the table, notably Baron Werther's despatch: "The Federal Ambassador," he said, "gives an account in it of an interview he had had at Paris. He brings to our knowledge the unacceptable demand you are aware of. The King was to write a letter of apology, the contents of which were set forth. The only official reply I gave to the Ambassador in regard to this matter, was to express

to cease his interviews with me and refer to the Chancellor. Therefore it was not after conferring with me in the morning that he did so, because he then intended receiving me in the afternoon, on the arrival of the mail he was expecting from Sigmaringen; it was after having read Baron Werther's despatch. Must it not be concluded from this that it was not my communication that made him decide to have recourse to an aide-de-camp to inform me of Prince Leopold's desistance and to telegraph to Count Bismarck? It seems evident that it was solely the suggestion which came direct from Paris, and was transmitted by his Ambassador, that caused him to take these resolutions.

[1] *La France et la Prusse avant la guerre*, p. 208.

my conviction that he had misunderstood the verbal communications he gave an account of, that it appeared to me absolutely impossible that overtures of this nature could have been made, and that, in any case, I refused to submit the despatch to his Majesty's attention." [1]

It was, therefore, our suggestion at the final moment which permitted Count Bismarck to place the French Government in the alternative of submitting to the most cruel insult or of drawing the sword. The Chancellor considered war with France inevitable, he wanted that war; for over a twelvemonth he had held this affair of the candidature of a Hohenzollern Prince to the Spanish crown in reserve, as I have said, with the intention of turning it to account against us. For that reason he is and remains the principal and responsible author of the war. Still, he would have been unable to bring that war about, but for the unfortunate proposals of July 13th.

Let us suppose for a moment that at Paris, on July 12th, they had strictly confined themselves to the instructions sent to me at forty-five minutes

[1] The King felt this incident quite as keenly. In General de Caprivi's speech from which I have already quoted, one notices the following passage: "I have here an authentic note from King William dated July 13th. It is stated therein: 'It is necessary to declare that I am indignant at the demand of the French Ministers, and that I intend to act in regard to it as I think fit.'"

past twelve; that they had paid no attention to Prince Anthony's telegram, as was the Emperor's desire; that they had not taken the initiative of any new proposal; that they had on the contrary, patiently awaited the expiration of the delay solicited by the King and accorded by us, as they had undertaken to do; what, I ask, on this hypothesis, would have occurred? The following day, the 13th, the day agreed upon, the King would have made me his declaration, and I should have transmitted it to Paris. What would have been the effect both on the Chamber and on public opinion? It was positively to France, this time, that the desistance would have been notified, and by whom? By the King of Prussia whom we had addressed direct, and who, by adding his approbation, recognised the lawfulness of our claims and consequently of our intervention. Prince Anthony, the Spanish Ambassador, the communication which had passed between them, all disappeared in presence of the step taken by the Sovereign whom we had made a party to the affair. What more complete satisfaction could we exact, and how could it have failed to meet with the general assent of the country and of its representatives?

Suppress then, hypothetically, the incidents of the last day, and what remains? What M. de

Gramont has denied in every form, that is to say, that I had fulfilled the mission entrusted to me with complete success. The reader will decide; I do not ask for his indulgence, I appeal to his impartiality.

COUNT BENEDETTI.

PARIS, *January*, 1873.

THE END

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